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Our Cover

The cover design depicts three rocket space ships on their way to distant worlds. The new cover pages, which will carry out similar effects, will be of interest to our readers.

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The Man from Tomorrow

By Stanton A. Coblentz

THE author of this story is distinctively one of our readers' favorite writers. This is so true that there is no need for us to expaciate on it. It is not too much to say that in these pages he has surpassed himself. Associated with his satirical view of things in general, and they certainly are open thereto, there is a humorous or rather a comical strain in it.

CHAPTER I

Madman or Genius?

AS I glance back upon that strange and bewildering episode which not long ago was the riddle of scientist and common man alike, I have difficulty in pointing to the moment when it all began. But I believe that, had it not been for one seemingly innocent remark which I made before the International Congress of Engineers, I would have been spared the most disturbing but most fascinating experience of my career, and my fellow men would have gone a little more calmly, if not quite so wisely, along their way.

For nearly forty years, as the reader may recall, I have held the Chair of Physics in the University of Gotham; and it was presumably in testimony to the length of my service to science, rather than in recognition of any particular attainments, that I was called upon to preside at the eminent gathering which included some of the world's foremost mechanical geniuses. At all events, I was conscious of no especial qualifications enabling me to shine before that august body; and no one, consequently, was more surprised than I, when my opening address was tumultuously received, and when certain of my remarks, catching the notice of the daily press, were printed and reprinted and criticized and commented upon with an earnestness and gusto that their banal character certainly did not merit.

"SAVANT FORETELLS SUPER-WORLD" I remember seeing in headlines in one of our metropolitan papers; and, though I winced at the blatant indelicacy of the tone, I lost no time in reading the article to the end:

"Professor Ellery Howard, speaking before the International Congress of Engineers, threw his audience into an uproar last evening by his forecasts of the future of science. 'Modern discoveries and inventions,' he declared, 'have brought us to such a stage that the world is tiptoing at the brink of a precipice. At any moment some fresh work of genius, going only a few inches beyond what we have achieved already, may upset the balance of civilization and revolutionize human life, deluging us with blood and terror, or inaugurating the Millenium. . . . Let us therefore regard every new invention with cautious but tolerant eyes, for who knows what harmless-seeming instrument devised by some unhonored Stephenson or Marconi may hold the key to human destiny? . . .'"

On and on, in much the same vein, the report continued to the length of a column. Personally, I still have no idea why remarks so utterly commonplace should have created such storms of attention; but it is certain that they were quoted and requoted with an enthusiasm worthy of a better cause, until in the end, there was no housewife or schoolchild to whom they were not as familiar as any time-honored platitude. It will be better to say nothing of the swarms of letters which came to make a torment of my life, nor of the multitude of dinner and after-dinner invitations from which I had to shield myself behind the stout tongue of my Secretary; it will be well to pass on at once to the one important aftermath—an aftermath as curious as it was unpredictable, and as brilliant in its outlines as it was alarming in its possibilities.

In a word, I should never have met James Richard Cloud, had it not been for that address before the Engineering Congress; and his weird masterpiece would not have been rescued from that oblivion wherein, perhaps, it would have been best for it to remain. It was only by an accident that Cloud succeeded in reaching me at all, for the deluge of callers following my engineering address had compelled me to refuse admittance to all whose business was not urgent. I still do not know how he managed to make his way past the formidable defenses of my secretary; my only explanation is that she had momentarily left the room, and that he had simply walked into the unguarded citadel. However that may have been, I do know that, while I sat late one afternoon in my office in the Natural Science Department of Gotham University, poring over some

reports I was about to submit to the President, I was startled by the entrance of an uninvited visitor.

Or, rather, I was startled by his presence, for I really did not see him enter. Looking up from my papers, I observed him standing in front of my desk, peering inquiringly down upon me, with the meekest and mildest expression possible, as though to say, "Go right on with your work, Professor. Don't let me disturb you."

Had he arrived phantom-like through the solid walls, he could not have astonished me more. The first glance told me that he did not belong here; not often had such a character been seen within the respectable walls of Gotham University. A gray-headed man of fifty-eight or sixty, with a gray untended beard, he was clad in the scraps and tatters of a vagabond. His grimy felt hat, which he held in his hand, had been bruised and battered into the shapelessness of dough; his soiled brown shirt was ripped beneath the collar, and his scrawny neck was dark with the accumulated dust of many days. Altogether, with his tall, ungainly, underfed figure and his pallid bony face, he made a most unattractive appearance; and yet, even in that first surprised glimpse, I could not help seeing that there was something unusual about him—not only in the hard, stubborn lines of the jaw and lips, but in the black eyes, smoldering as though their obscure depths held all the unfathomable sorrow of the world.

"Well?" I jerked out, as my astonished glance met that of the intruder. "Who are you? Where do you come from? What do you want here?"

He met my gaze with an unperturbed steadiness, and only the inconsequential manner, in which he swung his hat back and forth, gave evidence of his nervousness.

"Professor Ellery Howard?" he inquired, as the bloodless lips parted to reveal a badly decayed set of teeth.

"Yes!" I acknowledged, with a growl. "What do you want?"

Instantly a thin, fleshless hand shot toward me across the desk. "Pleased to meet you, Professor Howard! Hope you don't mind the intrusion! I've been reading your books for years! Always looked on you as a master in your field! But never thought of coming here till to-day, when I read in the paper about your remarks. This certainly is a real pleasure!"

Perfunctorily I had taken his hand, which gripped mine with a clinging intensity. "I didn't get the name," said I.

"Oh, that doesn't matter!" he laughed. "You've never heard it before, anyhow. Cloud! James Richard Cloud! But maybe you'd better remember it. It might, for all you know, be a name to remember!"

I eyed my visitor quizzically, wondering vaguely whether he could be mad. It occurred to me to press the bell, and instruct one of the guards to escort him quietly out; and I do not know what restrained me, unless it were a certain burning eagerness in his eyes, coupled with the strange, indefinable sense, which seemed to tell me that somehow I was on the brink of an adventure.

"Now as you might have guessed," Cloud rattled on, apparently never pausing to ask himself whether I had the time to listen to his chatter, "I've come here for a reason. A very special reason. That speech of yours shows that you're the sort of man I can take into my confidence. You're a friend of inventors. You realize the possibilities of great discoveries. Why, your words might have been made to order to fit my case!"

"To fit your case?" I gasped, a little taken aback by the audacity of the man.

"Yes, exactly!"

My visitor was warming to his theme, and the glitter in his eyes was concentrated in two intense, fiery points that fascinated and yet troubled me.

"Your words exactly fit my case, Professor! Of course, you couldn't have known that. But they do you credit just the same. Talk about revolutionizing human life! Talk about holding the key to human destiny! Why, sir, that's just what I'm doing! Yes, sir, and no one but me knows about it—yet!"

Once more the thought occurred to me that the man was out of his head. "You're modest, aren't you?" I managed to mumble.

"Modest? No! Why should I be? When one's reached the point that I have, the time for modesty is past! For thirty-five years I had to be modest, while I was working for results! But now that I've succeeded, why not let the world know about it?"

In spite of the flaming earnestness with which Cloud spoke, I could not help smiling. Certainly, his raveled garments, with their ill-assorted patches, did not indicate a superb success! No doubt, I reflected, the man was harmless; but it would not have surprised me to have had him inform me that he was Newton, Darwin, or Edison.

Thinking to humor him, I murmured, mildly, "Well, then, Mr. Cloud, why don't you let the world know about your success?"

The vehemence with which he met these words astounded me. A light that was actually savage blazed in his eyes; the thin lips upcurled as if in anger or defiance; his great fist clenched and came down in a heedless frenzy among the papers on my desk, scattering ink and havoc among them. And while I opened my mouth in a vain effort at protest, my visitor fairly roared into my ear:

"Why don't I let the world know? God in Heaven! do you think I haven't tried? Do you think I haven't walked my legs half off and shouted my lungs out trying to make people believe? Do you think I haven't thrown my last penny away struggling to get some one to take an interest? Look at these rags! Do you suppose I always went about this way? Not in the least! Once I had money! I've spent it all on my invention! But now no one will believe me. They won't even look at it, won't even see how it works! They only laugh! Can you imagine it?—they think I'm crazy!"

I could easily imagine it, but forebore to say so. Once more some strange magnetism behind the man's words held me fascinated; and, at the same time, I was not unmoved at the sight of a stray tear or two that had gathered to his eyes and trickled unchecked down his cheeks.

And so, when I spoke, it was in kindlier tones than before. "Sit down," I invited. "Tell me all about it."

He slouched gratefully into a seat, sighed with relief, and then, while I waited politely, went on to explain, "I can't mention much about it, Professor, till you actually see it. It's seeing that counts, not hearing. Chances are, if I simply speak about it, you won't believe, any more than the rest of them. Why, you'd probably laugh in my face at the mere mention of my Dimension Machine——"

"Dimension Machine?" I echoed.

He stared at me with a sheepish grin, in the manner of one conscious of a blunder. "There I've gone and let the cat out of the bag!" he muttered. "Well then, I might as well go on and tell you. I always think of it as the Dimension Machine, although it is really a Fourth Dimension Machine. That is to say, an engine to put us into touch with the Fourth Dimension."

I peered at him with an incredulous smile, exactly as if he had told me that he had solved the problem of perpetual motion or of squaring the circle.

"You don't believe me, do you?" he flung out at me,

in a disappointed, almost resentful, manner. "No, of course you don't! But surely, Professor Howard, you're not going to be like all the rest! You're certainly going to listen to me, aren't you?"

"Go on," I mumbled, none too encouragingly.

"Then consider this," he proceeded, his thin face drawn up into a thoughtful expression. "You know some of the modern theories about the fourth dimension. How Einstein and others suppose that the fourth dimension of space is time. Well, I don't want to claim any one else's laurels, but that was my view even before the name of Einstein was heard of. I've been working at it for thirty-five years. It's my belief too that the fourth side of space is time, and that, in a sense, all time exists simultaneously and eternally —although on some other plane than ours—just as all space exists simultaneously and eternally. Now somewhere there must be a point of contact between the third dimension and the fourth, just as there is between the third and the second—between a flat surface, let us say, and the cube of which it is a part. If we could find that point—as I have, in fact, found it—we could literally walk out on the fourth dimension, and see anywhere in time, or else we could reach out with a sort of fishing-line and seize anything anywhere in the past or future and bring it into the third dimension for our closer inspection."

"That all sounds very good, Mr. Cloud," I acknowledged, still unconvinced. "Then you mean to say you could watch the armies of Julius Caesar. Or gaze upon our descendants in the year 4000?"

"Why not? Why not?" returned the inventor, his lips twisting with disdain, as though to say, "Give me something hard, why don't you?"

"I've not only looked upon Julius Caesar, but upon Moses, Rameses and the Cave Man!" he insisted. "Also, I've glanced ahead as far as the year 10,000, beyond which my machine still won't work very well."

"That doesn't surprise me," said I, reverting to my original theory that Cloud was a madman.

He reached into his pocket, and drew forth a soiled paper crowded with mathematical notations. "Here are the computations that enabled me to reach my results," he explained. "It's taken years of calculation .... I might almost say I've invented a new mathematics. Of course, you haven't time to go into all that just now. First you'd better take a look into my machine. After you've seen Charlemagne or Christopher Columbus, maybe you'll be convinced."

"Really, Mr. Cloud," I suggested, thinking it would be easier to be convinced that he had escaped from some institution, "I believe you'd better come around some other day. Can't you see how busy I am? My secretary will show you the way out."

And this time I reached in deadly earnestness toward the bell.

In spite of the abject, woebegone expression with which he sat regarding me, this probably would have been the end of my acquaintance with John Richard Cloud—had it not been for the untimely entrance of my assistant, Dr. Roscoe Horn, a man who had earned no small distinction by his Doctor's thesis on the non-Euclidian geometry.

Obviously taken aback at the sight of my strange visitor, Dr. Horn stood framed for an instant in the doorway and then was about to retreat, when I motioned him to me.

"Dr. Horn," said I, on an impulse that I have never been able to explain, "meet Mr. Cloud. . . . Mr. Cloud has been conducting some experiments with the Fourth Dimension. He claims to have solved its mystery."

"Yes, and here are the figures," testified Cloud, pointing to the paper with the mathematical notations. "I have found a way of glancing out along Superdimensional space."

To my surprise, Dr. Horn reached for the paper and began examining it attentively. At first his features were puckered in a puzzled frown, but after a moment his expression became graver and more absorbed and his eyes were glued to the page with a devouring relish. . . . Several minutes passed. Dr. Horn uttered no word except a mumbled exclamation of surprise; Cloud stood staring at the newcomer with the eagerness of a drowning man; while I sat peering at both of them in impatience and surprise, wondering what interest Dr. Horn could find in the scribblings of a lunatic. . . .

"By heaven, Mr. Cloud, this is splendid! It certainly does look as if you're on the track of something!" enthused my assistant, turning to the inventor with a congratulatory nod. "It would take hours, of course, to follow all this out in detail, but I can see in what direction you're working. Theoretically, you're starting from a sound enough basis——"

"And practically I've been working from a sound enough basis!" proclaimed the inventor. "Dr. Horn won't you come with me and see my machine for penetrating the Fourth Dimension? Professor Howard, won't you come too? I won't take much of your time! But I promise to convince you!"

"What machine are you talking about?" inquired Dr. Horn.

Requiring no second bidding, Cloud launched into a detailed explanation, which I hardly attempted to follow. What startled me was not so much my visitor's extravagant contentions as the fact that Dr. Horn, while evidently surprised, was by no means so incredulous as I might have expected. "Sounds pretty far-fetched," he grunted, when Cloud had finished. "Still, I wouldn't attempt to pass snap judgment. . . . What do you say, Professor? Suppose we go and see this man's machine? What harm can come of it? At worst, we may waste half an hour."

Gruffly I muttered something about the amount of work that lay untouched. But the jovial laughter of Dr. Horn dissipated my objections like mist. Besides, in spite of all Cloud's queerness, my curiosity had been awakened by the strange fire and earnestness of his demeanor.

And so, half reluctantly, I nodded assent; and a few minutes later, accompained by my assistant and the inventor, I was on the way to Cloud's lodgings, where the most startling adventure of our lives awaited us.

CHAPTER II

A Journey in Reverse

AS THE three of us made our way together through alleys and side-streets toward the poorer section of town, Cloud engaged in an almost continuous monologue:

"I don't want you to think I've been attempting anything so exceedingly strange and unheard of. In fact, the general idea that time and space can be interchanged is far from new to mathematicians. For a long while they have been accustomed to treating time as one of the dimensions of space. And that which can be represented in mathematics, must have some reality in the outside world. To take an old illustration: suppose that a two-dimensional creature were living on the flat surface of a table, but were unable to see anything above or below. And suppose that, being skilled in mathematics, it was informed by its computations that there actually was something above and below, even though something which its limited

senses could not perceive. Would it not be the intelligent thing to try to invent some instrument to lift it over or beneath the plane surface and give it a different perspective? And would it not, from its new angle of vision, be able to look down upon its fellows, grasping them in their entirety, and discovering in one second what it might otherwise take years to learn? All this, you will admit, is theoretically possible. And this, on a larger scale, is what has actually happened with my Dimension Machine."

To my surprise, Dr. Horn nodded approval. "The idea is an excellent one," he affirmed. "To tell you the truth, Mr. Cloud, something very much like it has often occurred to me. It seems a strange coincidence, but for years it has been my pet dream to master the Fourth Dimension. I have seriously thought of attacking the problem with properly constructed instruments—but, somehow, I have never quite gotten down to the actual task."

In Dr. Horn's eyes, as he spoke, there was a sparkle of enthusiasm that startled me, since he was revealing a side of his nature I had never suspected before.

By this time we were walking through a street of miserable, grimy red-brick side-walks, where street venders hawked their wares and droves of noisy children screamed and played. Before one of the dingiest and most ramshackle buildings on one of the most poverty-ridden blocks, Cloud paused with a mumbled "Here we are"; then, without further ado, led us up the grim, narrow stairway to the fourth floor. Panting and puffing from the unaccustomed exertion, I was escorted into a room which, having no outlook except on a pitchy court, was even more dark and depressing than I had expected; and, while our host turned on an old-style electric light, I sank into a bare-backed wooden chair to recover my breath.

"I have just two rooms," Cloud was telling us. "This one, of course, is the living room; the other one I call the laboratory. Shall I show you?"

"Just one moment!" I protested, raising my hand in a restraining gesture, while my eyes, I fear, fairly popped out of my head. Never had I seen such a living room as this! Once more the suspicion flashed over me that Cloud was insane—and this time, I thought, I had the best of reasons for that suspicion. Was I actually in the home of a fellow creature? Or was I in a museum? But no! even in a museum no room would have included so strange and varied a collection of oddities. My imagination fails me when I attempt to describe the appearance of that place: on the wall opposite me hung a broken copper sword curved in some antique fashion; beneath it stood an enormous cracked jug decorated in brilliant colors reminding me of old Grecian vases; to one side of it, I recognized the bas-relief of victorious, ancient warriors, presumably Assyrians or Babylonians; on the floor to my right was the fragment of an old Egyptian mummy-case, the hieroglyphics being clearly distinguishable among the intricate swathings and wrappings. More surprising yet was an enormous rough-hewn axe, with stone head and handle, which made hideous one of the corners of the room; while what amazed me most of all was the marble bust of a woman, broken off at the chin, but showing that exquisite grace and refinement of outline which we have learned to associate with the masters of old Athens.

"Lord in heaven!" I muttered, trembling like one not quite in control of his senses. "Where did you get all these—these——"

"Oh, those? Why, they're nothing at all!" returned Cloud, with a disdainful shrug. "More pickings and findings! Débris of the ages, you might say, which happened to get entangled in my Dimension Machine, and got thrust into our dimension. They've not much value, as you can see. I'm keeping them as curiosities."

"But, by the Almighty, if such things are possible—" I began, as I rose excitedly in order to examine a scrap of tapestry depicting two helmeted knights in combat. "If such things are possible——"

"Much more than that is possible!" interrupted Cloud. "Sometimes something of value turns up. I've been living for months from the proceeds of a gold necklace from the time of Louis XIV. But, of course, that was only a lucky accident. Happening to be at the point where the Fourth Dimension verges on the Third, things sometimes get shoved into our world by chance. But don't let that surprise you. Wait till you see what my machine can really do!"

"Go ahead, Mr. Cloud! Show us! I encouraged. For, while by this time more firmly convinced than ever that Cloud was mad, I was willing to concede that he was a madman of an unusual type.

"To tell you the truth, Professor, he's got me guessing," Dr. Horn whispered into my ear, as he passed into the adjoining room. "I've been examining that little strip of parchment over near the door. If it isn't a genuine Roman document from the third century, it's the cleverest imitation I've ever seen!"

Unluckily, I had no time to reply. Our host had switched on the lights in his "laboratory," revealing a fair-sized room littered with coils and wires, and malodorous with chemicals and strong acids. In the center stood a tall canvas-covered object of about the size of a piano—indeed, it might have been a piano, for all that we could tell; and to this article Cloud pointed with enthusiastic gestures. "The Dimension Machine!" he announced. "The Dimension Machine!"

Being in the position of spectators at a play before the first curtain has lifted, we could only peer interestedly at the object, and nod.

Slowly, and with the significant smile of a showman about to unveil some remarkable exhibition, Cloud withdrew the covering from about his machine. "There!" he exclaimed, with every evidence of satisfaction. "There! Now you can see for yourselves!"

A momentary silence followed. It was the silence not of amazement, but merely of a blank, unimpressive wonder. My first sensation was that of a vague disappointment—what was this curious instrument that Cloud had shown us? Certainly, it did not look nearly so strange or intricate as many mechanisms designed for much simpler ends. Directly facing me, at the end of the machine, I saw a large but quite ordinary-looking mirror; while other mirrors, to the number of thirty or forty, were connected with thin wires and rods, and arranged back to back and less than an inch apart. At the further end of the machine, I observed a complicated mass of steel rods and levers connecting with a basket-like device of wire of the size of a small barrel—but, except for these appliances, and a few electric bulbs and connections, there seemed to be nothing at all to the whole contrivance.

"You will observe the extra-dimensional mirrors," pointed out Cloud, speaking rapidly and excitedly, while his dark eyes burnt with a zealot's fire. "Watch them carefully. They may do strange antics."

With these words, he pressed a small button at one side of the machine; and the whole apparatus instantly expanded like a camera, until the mirrors were several inches apart and reached almost from end to end of the room.

"Now for the current," he continued, plugging a wire into an electric light socket, following which a low buzzing filled the room, and sparks began to flash and sizzle from somewhere amid the steel rods and levers.

"I need the electricity only incidentally. Any other source of power would do as well. It has nothing to do with the real purpose of the machine," the inventor explained. . . . "Now you'll see me get the mirrors into action. Don't take your eyes off them. Want to take a peep at past time?—or at future?"

"Past," decided Dr. Horn.

"Very well," acquiesced our host, turning to an object somewhat like a radio dial, and numbered, like such a dial, from one to a hundred. Just beneath it was a little lever, on one side of which we read the word "Forward," and on the other "Reverse." "The past is reverse, of course," we were told, while Cloud shifted the lever to the right. "Now how many years back would you like to go? I haven't got the gauge accurate as yet, but each number on the indicator represents, roughly speaking, one century."

"Oh, a thousand years would be enough," suggested Dr. Horn, in a casual manner.

"As you say!" nodded Cloud. . . .

"Of course," he added, apologetically, "you mustn't hold it against the machine if I turn the dial a little too far, and go back eleven hundred or even twelve hundred years."

I remarked that this was a sin we would forgive.

Then, while I watched with a smile which, I fear, was still just a little incredulous, Cloud began manipulating various bars and levers with such rapidity that we could not follow his movements. As he had promised, the mirrors did indeed perform strange antics! Propelled on small rods and wires, they moved in all directions; some swung upward, some sidewards, some downward, some tilted at curious angles, until each reflected its neighbors in odd and unexpected ways. For several minutes their movements continued, now slow, now rapid, while the buzzing and clattering of the machine filled the room, and at the same time Cloud was trying to make himself heard above the uproar.

"It isn't always easy to get things in the right position," he assured us. "Yet everything has been calculated mathematically, so that if the mirrors are in precisely the required relation to one another, and each properly reflects the lines and angles of its neighbors, they will also reflect the Fourth Dimension, and show what is going on there. . . . Ah! now I think we're getting near it! We may be a century or two off in our bearings, but that can hardly be helped."

So saying, he removed his hands from the machine, and all the movements and clattering instantly ceased.

"Now look carefully!" he directed. "You'll behold a scene in the tenth century or thereabouts!"

I looked as carefully as I knew how, but my smile of incredulity only broadened. All that I saw was the reflected lights of the room!

"You will have to concentrate, Professor," advised Cloud, turning to me reprovingly. "Sometimes the impressions are blurred at first, and the vision is obscured by one's third dimensional bias. But see! Why, you're looking at the wrong mirror! Can't you be more careful? Everything is as plain as daylight to me!"

I shifted my gaze to another mirror, and lo and behold! I did indeed see something unexpected. I was not sure at first that it was the Fourth Dimension; all that I knew was that it left me dizzy and bewildered; I was confronted by a confusion of crazy, meaningless lines, as if I had peered into one of those convex or concave mirrors which are sometimes displayed for comic purposes, and which distort the observer into a ten-foot living rail or into a walking circle. What crude sort of joke was Cloud trying to perpetrate?

But even as I asked myself this question, the scenes before me commenced to grow a little less puzzling and bizarre. I began to see order amid the chaos; I made out the contours of a green field, looking a little remote and queer, and yet unmistakably a green field! And in the distance I distinguished the shimmer of water and the cloudy shapes of trees!

"See!" cried our host, leaping up and down with the agitation of a four-year-old, and literally shaking his own hands in his excitement. "See! I told you, didn't I? The tenth century!"

Although willing to concede that Cloud had used some very clever trickery, I was still able to snort in unbelief. "H'm!" I grunted. "That's a country scene, all right! But what's to show me it isn't the twentieth century?"

Cloud stood gazing reflectingly into the mirror, and then reluctantly conceded, "Why, I guess there's nothing to show you. Unluckily, landscape scenery hasn't changed much in a thousand years. We'll have to shift the scene a bit—though, of course, there's always the danger of accidents. Some dinosaur bones, for example or else a stone or stump or some antique bit of furniture may get caught in the machine."

Once more Cloud turned to the levers, and there was another brief clattering, while the mirrors again changed places.

"Now maybe we'll get better results!" he declared. "We've gone back another generation or two!"

This time also I was aware of a confusion of lines—parallels that seemed to meet in contradiction of Euclid, curving triangles, squares that verged toward the circular, and circles that verged toward the square. Then by degrees my bewilderment subsided, and the mirror seemed to contain the reflection of a recognizable scene.

"By the eternal!" muttered Dr. Horn, beneath his breath. "It's like a picture out of a story book!" And I too muttered beneath my breath, unable to imagine by what diabolical ingenuity the inventor had produced his results.

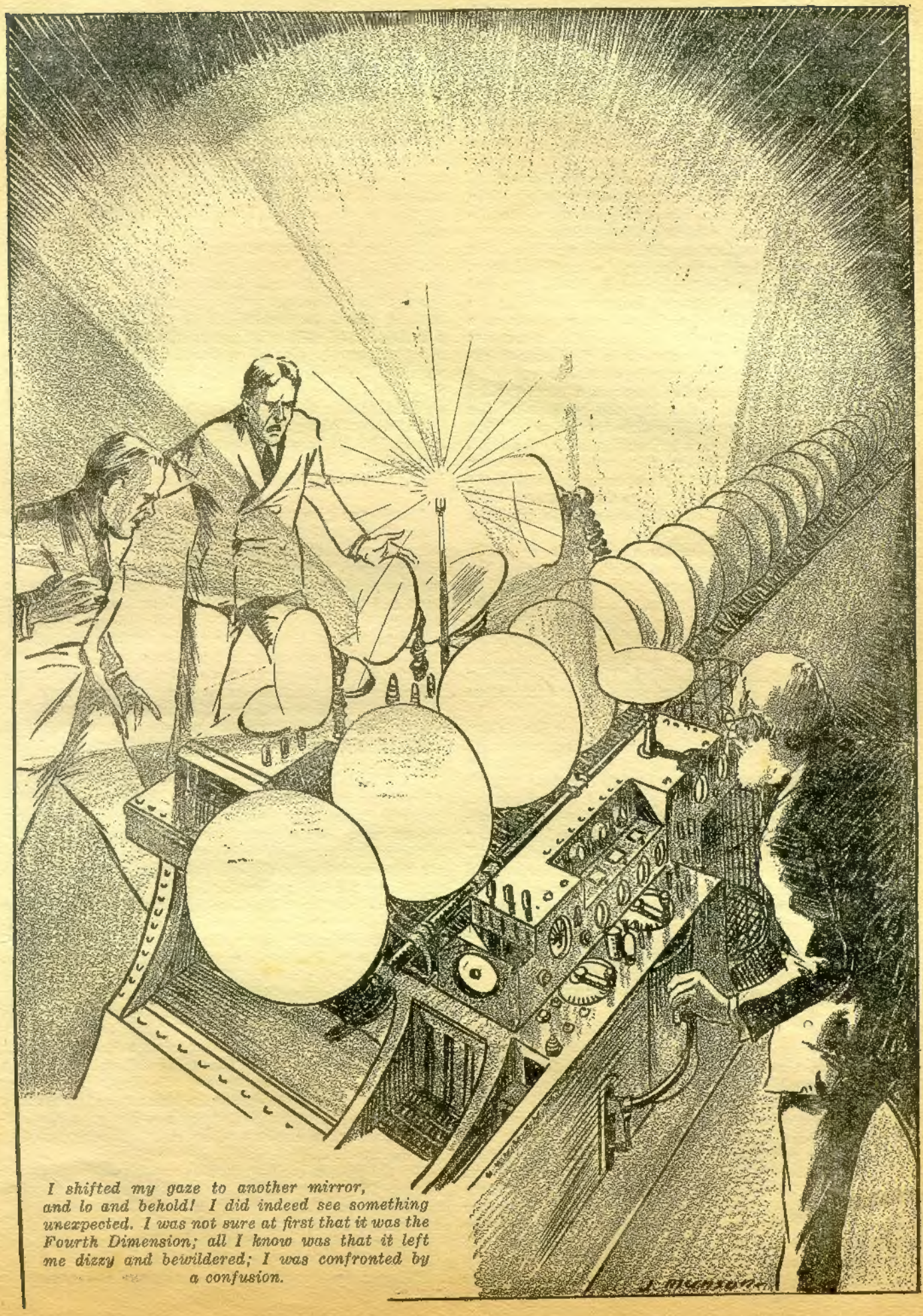
It seemed to me that I was gazing across a black pond at a gray stone building—a building whose ramparts and turrets and watch-towers and thin spidery slits of windows reminded me of the castles I had seen on a European tour years before. At the base of the edifice a huge door suddenly opened; several coarsely garbed men appeared; a drawbridge was slowly let down across the waters; then a score of horses strode forth, each bearing a rider apparelled from head to foot in steel and brandishing an eighteen-foot lance. . .

My observation of this astonishing scene was interrupted by the groan of our host.

"What a mistake!" he lamented. "What a mistake! I meant to make it a thousand years, and we've only gone back six or seven centuries! I'll have to try again!"

"One moment, please!" I snapped, still not quite unconvinced that he was attempting some roguery. And I began to look about the room for some concealed apparatus that might have produced the results. Could there be a hidden motion picture machine? This idea, I must admit, seemed absurd; yet it seemed less absurd than that Cloud was actually in touch with the Fourth Dimension. Accordingly, I conducted my investigation as diligently as a detective on the trail of a murder mystery. But I found no trapdoor, no disguised machinery, no sign of an abettor or confederate. All that I discovered to reward my pains were the bare walls and one small drawer containing—absolutely nothing.

Now all at once, despite all my years of sober scientific training, I was obsessed by a feeling such as I had not known since childhood. A strange shuddery



I shifted my gaze to another mirror, and lo and behold! I did indeed see something unexpected. I was not sure at first that it was the Fourth Dimension; all I know was that it left me dizzy and bewildered; I was confronted by a confusion.

sensation began to overwhelm me, as though I were in touch with something weird, something uncanny, something unhuman and appalling, a universe of black and bottomless mystery. Had I been a superstitious person, I would have crossed myself or mumbled secret prayers; as it was, I merely frowned and gritted my teeth. Irritated at my own weakness, I tried in vain to forget the chills that were creeping along my spine and was perhaps needlessly gruff in requesting the inventor to make further demonstrations.

This he readily consented to do, while Dr. Horn stood by grave and speechless, his stern features twisted into an expression of wonder, his eyes fixed upon the Dimension Machine with a telltale fascination.

It would entail endless repetition to describe all the wonders unfolded before us during the next half hour. Sceptical as I was in the beginning, I should have had to be imbecilely incredulous not to be convinced by the time I had peered at half a dozen new marvels: at a Crusading army, with its pilgrim's garb and its crosses; at a Roman amphitheatre during a gladiatorial exhibition; at Carthaginian warriors setting out with their trappings and their elephants; at a three-banked slave galley awkwardly cleaving the waters of the Mediterranean; at a royal Egyptian funeral procession held several thousand years before the birth of Christ. These and other sights equally unbelievable were flashed in rapid succession before our eyes, until both Dr. Horn and I were ready to grasp the inventor's hand with an almost tearful enthusiasm, and to proclaim that he was a veritable genius.

Only one final demonstration required to be made. "Your machine seems pretty efficient in scouring the past," acknowledged Dr. Horn, after we had gazed at China of the time of Confucius. "But how about the future? Can it do as well for coming events?"

"Of course!" the inventor asserted. "I merely have to reverse its direction."

And he pulled the lever labelled "Forward"—thereby opening the way for stranger results than any of us could have anticipated.

"I've really experimented much less with the future than with the past," he confided, as the mirrors paraded back and forth and up and down and around in an opposite direction from before. "But I've done enough to know I can succeed. Any part of time, of course, is accessible to one who can reach the Fourth Dimension. The difference between tomorrow and yesterday is no greater than the difference between east and west."

"Then, having seen a few men from yesterday, I'd like to see a man from tomorrow," I suggested, glibly.

Little did I suspect how literally my desire was to be fulfilled!

CHAPTER III

A Visitor from the Void

GLANCING into the mirrors of the Dimension Machine as they flashed with supposed reflections from the future, I was aware at first of the same insane confusion as when peering into the past. There were lines that twisted and wavered until I hardly knew whether they were jagged, circular or straight; there were triangles and quadrilaterals that appeared to meet and part and divide in defiance of all known laws of geometry; there were cubes and spheres that seemed somehow not cubes or spheres, since they were evidently able to pass through one another without touching; while their lefthand hemispheres had a habit of changing places with their right, as if by a process of instantaneous magic. Merely to glance at them, was enough to make my senses reel; and I was therefore relieved when at length the spectacle became a little less bewildering, and I was able to make out some sensible and recognizable scenes.

The first of those scenes, to be sure, were in no way remarkable. I saw a snow-capped mountain, and it did not seem to me to matter what the century might be; I saw a valley where pines were growing and cattle browsed in green meadows, and again the century was of no importance; I saw a rock-strewn desert where a hot sun blazed down on a parched infinity, and once more I did not care if the date were a thousand B. C. or five thousand A. D. "Are we going to see nothing by way of evidence?" I muttered, impatiently—when, suddenly, I had all the evidence I wanted.

Staring at me out of the mirror, were the stone walls and towers of a city, such as I had never imagined in my weirdest dream. I cannot describe it in detail, for my view of it was only momentary; I can only say that it jutted to the height of mountains, and that a multitude of thin spires, straight and black like the standing tree-trunks of a burnt forest, pointed skyward to the height of perhaps a mile; while each was joined to its neighbors by means of heavy steel meshes and cables like the connecting masts of a ship.

"A city of the year 2900!" exclaimed Cloud, enthusiastically. "Those tall towers, I assume, are the dwelling places of the well-to-do. Probably those that live below are old at forty because of the monoxide-infested air."

"Can't you give us something a little nearer our own times?" requested Dr. Horn, impressed and at the same time repelled by the exhibition.

"Certainly," conceded the inventor, as he again manipulated the levers of his machine. "Let's try to have a look at the twenty-second or the twenty-first century."

We now caught a glimpse of an enormous airplane, with a central compartment of the size of a Pullman car, in which dozens of passengers sat at their ease. Then, by an instantaneous shifting of the scenes, we had a view of something hideous and unspeakable, where clouds of yellow vapor rolled across a blackened land, and scores of thousands of men gasped and fell dead. . . .

"A future battlefield!" cried the inventor, in a voice of horror; and in his excitement, it seemed to me, he became exceedingly careless and lost control of his movements. For a moment he moved the levers without seeming to notice which one he was touching, and the mirrors reflected the craziest array of shifting lines and figures I had yet seen.

Now all at once, with disconcerting abruptness, there came a strange whirring and rattling from the instrument. The inventor uttered a sudden "Damn it!", and his eyes bulged with alarm; while his fingers began to work with lightning rapidity.

Whatever the trouble may have been, he was too late to repair it. While Dr. Horn and I loked on in dread and amazement, a vastly more frightening manifestation overwhelmed us. There came a flash of lightning; then another flash, and a deafening detonation; then a third flash, and, to our terror, the lights all at once went out, and, in the darkness, there sounded another thunderous demonstration, accompanied by a shattering noise and a thud as of some heavy body striking the ground. . . .

As the echoes ominously died away and comparative silence fell upon us, we heard the irritated voice of the inventor. "Anybody got a match? Damn it! Got a match, anybody? I don't know where I've put mine!"

Energetically I searched my pockets, but not one of the desired articles was to be found.

"Here's one!" mumbled Dr. Horn; and he struck a

light which flared only long enough to reveal how his hand was trembling.

"As luck wouldn't have it, that's my last!" he growled, as the flickering flame went out.

"I'll have to feel my way!" groaned Cloud, beginning a groping movement somewhere amid the obscurity. "Hope you don't mind, everybody. I'll find the electric connections in a minute. They couldn't have been damaged much."

Then, while he banged against some unseen object in the dark, he called out, by way of afterthought, "Neither of you hurt, are you?"

Although I had rarely received a sharper nervous shock, I had to join Dr. Horn in disclaiming all injury.

"Sorry it had to happen while you were here. That's about the worst short-circuit yet," apologized our host, as he collided with another obstacle in the gloom.

"Short-circuit?" echoed Dr. Horn.

"Short-circuit is what I call it. Naturally, it isn't really that."

For a moment, we were conscious that Cloud had halted in his stumbling movements about the room. "When some object from the Fourth Dimension gets too near my machine, it isn't simply reflected in the mirrors; it becomes entangled in the instrument, sending an electrical shock through the whole mechanism. That's what produced the lightning and thunder. But, believe me, gentlemen, I never saw things go quite so badly before. To tell you the truth, it had me scared for a minute."

"You mean to say—something from the Fourth Dimension may be in the machine now?" demanded Dr. Horn.

Even as my assistant uttered these words, Cloud gave a jubilant exclamation. "Ah! Here it is!" And, to our intense relief, he switched on the light.

"The bulb was merely jarred out of place," he explained. "No real damage done."

But we gave little thought to his words. Our attention was riveted upon the Dimension Machine. Certainly, Cloud's remark, "No real damage done," did not apply to his invention. It looked as if a storm had struck it; half of the mirrors lay cracked and broken; more than half of the rods were twisted and curved as though by an earthquake. "God have mercy!" moaned our host. "I am ruined!" And his face went suddenly white; the tears started to his eyes; he flung himself toward the shattered machine and began to examine it with the passion of a mother encountering a wounded child.

Perhaps it was because of his very fury that he failed to see that object which arrested the attention of Dr. Horn and myself. In the basket-like wire contrivance at one end of the machine, there was a large dark mass that had not been here before! Never have I had a more uncanny sensation than when I first set eyes upon it; it was almost as if something had been created out of nothingness, as if a solid reality had been shot at us from some other world! "What can it be?" I muttered into Dr. Horn's ears; while, without answering, he joined me in examining it.

Coming face to face with the object, both of us merely gasped and stared. So great was our bewilderment that we were unable to speak—was this only an hallucination?—a phantom? Was it a ghost bred of our own shocked imaginations? For we seemed to be gazing at a fellow man! Although the eyes were closed; although the position was cramped and unnatural; although the knees were drawn up against the chin, in a manner reminding us of a babe in its mother's womb; although the creature was fantastically clothed and unusually small for an adult, still it was unmistakably a man! How had it found its way inside that wire basket? Found its way in without removing or breaking any of the closely placed wires?

"Cloud! Mr. Cloud!" called Dr. Horn and I, as we both regained our voices at the same instant. "Come, Mr. Cloud! Look! Look!

The inventor, who had been examining the cracked mirrors with such mournful absorption that he had not even noticed the contents of the basket, slouched disconsolately over to us.

"Good heavens!" he wailed, as he caught a glimpse of the occupant of the wire cage; and he wrung his hands like one burdened with woes unbearable. "What have I done to deserve this? Isn't it enough to be showered with relics from the past? Now I've kidnapped a man from the future!"

The somberness with which Cloud uttered these words was such that, despite our own grave mood, Dr. Horn and I had difficulty not to laugh.

But we became serious enough the next moment, as the inventor pointed out the dangers of our predicament.

"Looks like a dead man, too!" he moaned. "The shock of coming to this century has killed him! Why, I'm nothing but a common murderer! Of course, maybe he would have died anyhow. But that doesn't help us out much. What shall we do with the body? Dispose of it like a gang of conspirators?—and then maybe be detected and brought to justice? Or quietly give the remains up to the police? Confess that they come from the Fourth Dimension? You know what will happen then. We'll all be able to escape the Electric Chair—on the ground of lunacy."

A long, long silence followed. The atmosphere about us seemed suddenly heavy, oppressive, gloomy, as though charged with some intense, invisible evil. Only too clearly we realized the truth of the inventor's remarks; only too distinctly I saw how we had involved ourselves in an adventure that threatened to end disastrously.

"Of course, if it comes to an investigation, I myself will take all the blame," our host assured us. "You two gentlemen are innocent—I will vouch for that."

"Come! Aren't you losing your head?" suddenly demanded Dr. Horn, in the manner of one grasping at a desperate hope. "How do you know our visitor is dead? Perhaps the shock of coming here hasn't killed him after all! Why not examine more closely? We may yet bring him back to life! First let's get him out of that cage! But hurry, hurry! His life may depend on our haste!"

"Good!" I acknowledged, inspired with fresh courage. "Very good! Got any tools handy, Mr. Cloud?"

With sudden frantic haste, Cloud fished about in an old chest, from which he produced a pair of pliers and a hammer. A moment later, we were busy freeing the stranger from his wire prison.

CHAPTER IV

The Awakening

AFTER we had released the captive and borne him to the couch in Cloud's living room, we began to take careful note of his appearance. He was, as I have already said, a small man, being not more than five feet in height; he was beardless and nearly bald, and yet his smooth, chalky pallid skin proclaimed him not past early middle age; his features were small and strong, and at the same time were peculiarly ugly in their irregularity, for the sharp chin projected at a twisted angle, the thin nose was bent slightly awry, and the bulbous forehead bulged more prominently on the right side than on the left. But the thing that struck us most strangely was not so much his physio-

gnomy as his clothes. He was, it seemed to us, almost in a state of undress: he was clad only in a single-piece costume, of some curious substance which, while dark at a distance, shimmered beautifully upon close approach; and not only were his arms bare, but his legs below the knees were exposed except for the sandals that covered his feet, while the upper part of his chest boasted no raiment, and down his back there was a big V-shaped slit reminding me of a woman's party gown.

From the moment when we set to work over this singular individual, we began to feel a pulse of reviving hope. His skin, as we discovered to our immense relief, was of almost normal warmth; apparently he could not have been dead long, if indeed he were dead at all. True, no trace of respiration was visible, nor could we at first detect any heart-beat; but after we had deposited him on the couch and began to fan his face and rub his limbs to restore the circulation, I thought that I saw him move slightly—ever so slightly, but more than one would have expected of a corpse!

"Take courage, Mr. Cloud," I advised. "We may still escape indictment as murderers."

As I uttered these words, it seemed to us all that a sigh—woefully faint and thin—escaped from the lips of the sufferer.

With significant glances, we stood regarding the stranger. Then Dr. Horn, reaching for a glass from the table, held it above the lips of the stricken man. Immediately a faint but perceptible film appeared.

"There!" cried my assistant, stroking his moustache in emphatic self-congratulation. "See! He lives! He lives!"

But like a dash of cold water came the words of the inventor "What help will that be if he's about to die? Can't you see, he hasn't any vitality at all? Why doesn't he show any pulse? If he isn't dead, then at least he's dying!"

"Wouldn't it be best to send for a doctor?" I urged.

But no one paid any heed to me, and I contented myself with reaching for the wrist of the unknown, and trying for the tenth or twelfth time to detect some evidence of a heart-beat. At first the effort appeared as fruitless as before; but after a moment I did seem to notice a faint rhythmic movement! How pitiably slow and weak it was! Yet it was strong enough to lend me new hope! "Take courage!" I exclaimed once more. "Our friend may still recover."

Cloud sniffed incredulously; and I, disregarding him, pressed my ear against the afflicted man's breast, in the hope of still more encouraging evidence. Listening on his left side, in the supposed position of the heart, I was dismayed to hear nothing at all; whereupon, moved by some impulse that I still do not understand, I shifted my attention to the right side. And immediately my efforts were rewarded! A subdued but regular throbbing greeted my ears.

"Heavens, but this is strange!" I muttered. "His heart seems to be on the right side!"

"The most likely thing in the world," remarked Cloud, shrugging indifferently. "In making the change of dimensions, his sides happened to get reversed. It's no more peculiar than if an object falling through the air landed upside down."

Since my studies of the Fourth Dimension were much more limited than Cloud's, I did not venture to argue. Instead, I felt once more for the stricken person's pulse, which, to my surprise, appeared to offer some feeble resistance. And, to my further surprise, the pulse was noticeably firmer than before!

"Prepare yourselves, friends!" I exclaimed. "Our patient is not going to die—not, at least, today!"

As if to confirm these words, the lips of the stranger opened in another sigh—apparently unconscious, yet louder and more distinct than before. We could now see that the chest was heaving slightly and slowly, as if with the first labored efforts at reviving animation.

Never did nurse or physician attend his charge with more trembling devotion than did we bestow upon our mysterious visitor, now that he seemed to be struggling out of his comma. . . . Half an hour went by; an occasional sigh or moan continued to escape from his lips; once or twice he shifted slightly in position; and all the time the heaving of his chest was growing more pronounced and more regular and the pulse was becoming stronger and nearer to normal; while we, hovering over him, were energetic in warming his stiffened muscles, in applying water to his parched lips, and in fanning him with many a reviving breath.

It was with unexpected suddenness that he at last opened his eyes. An anxious second passed while the dilated pupils stared at us with a dazed expression, from amid the pallid blue of the iris and the thin face were expressive of bewilderment and wonder. Then the man lifted himself slightly on his elbows, and an exclamation, half of amazement, half of terror, tore itself from his throat.

"Where am I? Who are you?" we afterwards judged to be the import of the words; though the syllables were all slurred together, and what he said might be more properly represented as, "Where'm'I? Who'r'ou?"

"Where am I? Who are you?" he repeated, as his gaze traveled in startled inquiry about the room.

And then, as his bloodless hand anxiously stroked his forehead, he seemed to us like a victim of shell-shock, trying to collect his scattered thoughts. With an effort, while his breath came short and fast, he gradually drew himself up to a sitting posture; and once more his words came forth, being addressed, it seemed, not so much to us as to himself.

But this time he spoke more slowly; and though his accentuation struck us as coarse and peculiar and he still showed the same deplorable tendency to slur his consonants and forget his vowels, we were able to make out most of his words.

"What has happened to me? Have I died? Or can this be the Fifth Dimension? No! Not that, either! Where then is Maranna? And the observatory—where is the observatory? I do not see them! They are all gone! It is so strange! Who, who are these uncouth persons here?"

With a sigh, he sank back once more upon the couch. Dr. Horn and I exchanged significant glances; but no one cared to speak.

Now it was that an alarming thought flashed over me. What if we had captured a lunatic from some other age?

But in a moment this fear began to be dissipated. With an obvious effort, the man arose once more to a sitting position; for a full minute he stared at us without uttering a word; then, as he gazed, his pupils began to contract, and a keener, more intelligent expression filled his eyes. The look of astonishment and wonder had not yet left him, but it was apparent that he had been delirious before, and had scarcely been conscious what he was saying.

"Where am I?" he inquired once more, but in a slower, more deliberate manner. "I do not know you! What place is this? What has overtaken me?" And there followed a mumbled sentence which none of us could make out at all.

"Be of good cheer!" I encouraged. "You are with friends."

"Be of good cheer!" he repeated, as though I had said something unusual. "What a curious-sounding phrase! I wonder where you learned such an antique expression!"

There followed an embarrassed pause; after which the stranger inquired, in a hasty, rattling voice, "Would you mind telling me, am I in a museum? Why all the ancient trappings about this place? How comes it that you use that obsolete style of lamp over there? I believe I once saw something like it, though not quite so primitive-looking, in an exhibition of old heirlooms. An electric light, that's what it's called! But why not use the modern inter-atomic bulbs?"

"Interatomic bulbs?" we all echoed, wondering if the man were still delirious.

"Then look at those costumes of yours," proceeded our visitor, breaking into a smile that was dangerously close to laughter. "Where did you ever procure them? Are you dressing for a masquerade? Why, they remind me of survivals from the Neurotic Age! You, sir in particular"—here the speaker pointed to me with an amused grimace—"are to be congratulated upon your post-Medieval style. It is ugly and unsanitary enough to have pleased our ancestors. Why not take it to a specialist in curios? It should bring in at least a hundred tantrums!"

"Tantrums?" I demanded, puzzled and offended, for I had always prided myself upon the neatness of my apparel, and nothing could have been more unexceptional than the well tailored brown business-like suit I was wearing. "What are tantrums?"

"What are tantrums?" repeated the stranger, apparently no less surprised than I. "You speak, my dear sir, as if you had never heard of the medium of exchange!"

"And you, my dear sir," I retorted, still wincing beneath the wound he had dealt me, "speak as if you had never seen a decently clad citizen. Tell us, do you expect everyone to go around like you in a bathing suit?"

Our visitor looked more puzzled than ever. "Bathing suits?" he challenged. "As if anybody needs a suit for bathing! Really, sir, you have the most ridiculous ideas! And what, may I ask, do you find wrong with me? Am I not dressed in the most modest, conservative garment permitted by the Censor?"

This was too much for me. I opened my mouth to reply; but I could only gape at the speaker and remain silent, unable to find words to express my conflicting feelings.

"Once more I ask you, where am I? Who are you all?" demanded the unknown. "Have I been kidnapped? Or have my experiments thrown me among you by chance? You all seem so strange! Your house is so strange, your clothes are so strange, and your speech is the strangest of all! You have such a coarse, unnatural accentuation, and use so many curious words! It is really difficult to follow you. I swear to you, I have not been employing a time-eliminator; otherwise, I could not believe I was still in the twenty-third century!"

"Twenty-third century?" we gasped, looking at one another questioningly.

Something in the manner in which we uttered these words must have struck our visitor peculiarly. "Why, you seem surprised," he remarked, eyeing us keenly. "What century is this, then, if not the twenty-third?"

It was Dr. Horn who broke the distressing news. "I am sorry to have to inform you, my friend," he declared, in slow, hesitant tones, "I am sorry to have to inform you that you are a little misplaced in time. This is not the twenty-third century. Not by three hundred years. It is now the year 1930."

"1930!" bawled our guest, in a voice vibrant with horror. "Heaven have mercy!"

Suddenly he sprang to his feet. His fists were clenched; his knees trembled; his eyes glittered with agony and rage. "1930!" he shrilled. "What a doom! What a doom! To be back in the Neurotic age! What have I done to deserve this? What have I done? Why couldn't I have gone to some other age, any other age at all?"

Speechlessly we looked on at the poor man's sufferings, unable to help him, unable to speak a word in consolation; while his features worked with an anguish that it was pain to see, and he paced the room with the distraction of a trapped animal.

After a moment, having spent his feeble strength, he sank down upon the couch with a moan, and buried his face in his hands. Then, after rocking back and forth in frantic emotion, he arose on an impulse, and, addressing himself to me, burst out imperiously, "Sir, I demand—I demand that you transport me back to my own century!"

"Why, I—I'm sure I'd be glad to—if I could," I blurted out, a little shaken by the fury of the attack. "But you're asking the wrong man."

"We can't—really we can't," added Cloud, mournfully, as he swung open the door to the adjoining room and revealed the ruins of the Dimension Machine. "The invention that got you here is destroyed. There isn't another like it in the whole world. I'm afraid it couldn't have gotten you back, anyhow."

Even amid the frenzy of his grief, our visitor had time to peer at the Dimension Machine with lower lip curled into a sneer. "So that's the invention that got me here? You mean to say you actually used that? Oh, yes, it does vaguely remind me of our own hyper-space engines. But how rudimentary-looking. Where is its time-amplifier? Where is its plane-differentiator? Where is its distance-generator? God in heaven, it doesn't seem to have any safety equipment at all! No wonder I got caught in it!. No wonder!"

Sinking back again to his seat on the couch, our visitor continued, in less passionate tones, "Of course, it's not your fault altogether. I have myself to blame too. Yes, I really have myself to blame. If I hadn't been trying to explore the Fifth Dimension, I would never have been caught in the Fourth. To be sure, I didn't mean to leave my own age. But that was one of the risks I had to take. And so here I am, among my ancestors of the Era of Decadence, nearly three hundred years before I am born! Was ever any man so punished before?"

"Really, sir, it isn't so bad as all that," suggested Dr. Horn, in the diffident manner of a schoolboy addressing his master. "The Twentieth century, as you will find, is actually a very advanced period —"

"A very advanced period!" Long and scornful was the laughter of our visitor. "A very advanced period, you say? You have an excellent sense of humor, sir! Personally, I haven't read a great deal about your age, being always concerned with cultural subjects; but our historians wouldn't agree with you. Why, don't you recall that science was only in its infancy then? They hadn't even invented such everyday commodities as ultra-violet vision, inter-atomic heating, radio intelligence-testers, automatic thought-regulators, X-ray character dissectors, and a thousand and one other necessities of civilized life. Indeed, they had created almost nothing except machines for producing neuroses, which would have led to racial suicide or insanity if a more enlightened era hadn't followed. No, sir, you can't convince me that the Neurotic Age was progressive!"

And once more the man from tomorrow broke into a blasting burst of laughter.

"But if this be the Neurotic Age," I inquired, galled by his manner, "what, pray is your own era called?"

He hugged his dwarfish knees and rocked back and

forth in renewed laughter. "The day of the Superman!" he said. It was a strange sight to see this little creature diminutive as compared with us, yet so positive in his views, standing before us arms a-kimbo, and upholding in the most matter-of-fact way, the ways and methods of his century. He was like a child instructing his elders, for as a matter of course, he was absolutely positive, we might almost say obstinate, in his own quiet way of dilating on the great advantages of his era.

Somehow or other, the condition of things with us and our point of view, seemed to impress him as very comical, for his ideas had so much of advance in them that their oddities were really masked by it, and we could not feel that they were at all comical.

"But if this be the Neurotic Age," I enquired, galled by his manner, "what, pray, is your own era called?"

CHAPTER V

The Man from Tomorrow Takes Command

AFTER our visitor's mirth had subsided, his face was crossed once more by an expression of intense pain. He began to bite his lips and to mutter to himself; and, wringing his hands, he arose and paced the room again. "Maranna!" he moaned, in barely audible tones. "Maranna! Oh, when will we ever meet now?"

A racked moment passed in silence, while he struggled visibly with his emotion, and at length, with an evident effort, managed to twist his lips into stern lines of resignation.

Then, seeing how curiously we were eyeing him, he attempted to answer our unspoken questions. "Maranna," he confided, in a trembling voice, "was my laboratory assistant. She was to have been my mate. It has just occurred to me—she is buried three hundred years in the future. Perhaps I shall never see her again!"

Despite all his efforts at a stoic repression, the tears were gathering to the blue eyes of the man from tomorrow.

But, with a desperate resolve, he finally wiped the tears away, and managed soberly to explain:

"Maranna and I, you see, conducted all our experiments together. My name is Wormwood—John Wormwood. I had charge of the International Hyper-Space Observatory at Mount Holrood. We used to decide such questions as the appearance of the secondary craters on the other side of the moon, or the state of the magma two thousand miles beneath the earth; or else maybe we would foresee what was going to occur on the seventh dark satellite of the star, Vega, in the year 1,000,001. We would also explore——"

"Did you discover much about the Fourth Dimension?" interrupted Cloud, his dark eyes glowing with eagerness.

"Fourth Dimension?" Wormwood stared at his interrogator in wonder mixed with a peculiar disdain. "No, we didn't give much attention to elementary work. Our peculiar concern was the Fifth Dimension. We'd pretty nearly mastered that too, and were contemplating going on into the Sixth. It was my effort to complete my discoveries that landed me here. I had invented a machine to project myself into the Fifth Dimension, and I made my first experiment with it only last night. That is to say"—here the man from tomorrow paused in evident embarrassment—"that is to say, one night three hundred years from now. But I must have lost my balance, and in a moment of absent-mindedness descended into the Fourth Dimension, where your machine accidentally picked me up. Though it won't happen for three centuries yet, it really seems only an hour ago when I stepped into the little aluminum compartment, saw Maranna smiling down upon me, heard her switch on the inter-atomic power, and felt myself whirled away into nothingness."

An impressive silence followed. I was on the point of saying something terse and strong, for it did not seem to me that to make a journey to the twentieth century was exactly to be "whirled away into nothingness." But I was deterred out of respect for the grief that still convulsed our visitor's rugged features.

It was Dr. Horn that put the next question. "If you know so much, sir, about super-space, surely you should be able to help us to construct a machine to send you back to your own age. Why not show us the way?"

But Wormwood, to our surprise, did not take kindly to this suggestion. He merely stared at us hopelessly, as if to say, "Oh, what's the use? What's the use?" And it was a minute before he answered, in a dull, despondent manner:

"It would be the easiest thing in the world to contrive such a machine if you had the equipment. But I'm sure you haven't. Where are your molecular compressors? your radio-propeller gauges? your etheric estimators? not to speak of your inter-atomic power plants? No, I'm sure you haven't any facilities at all, and won't have any for a hundred years yet. It's all very well to ask me to make a Fourth Dimensional machine, but could one of your own mechanics construct an airplane or a locomotive with no apparatus other than the stone axes and flint cleavers of the Cave Man?"

Having uttered these words, the man from tomorrow shook his head despairingly, and fell into a brown study.

Once more I was tempted to protest, for the reference to the Cave Man seemed to me entirely beside the point. However, I restrained myself, since I realized that, after all, Mr. Wormwood was in a peculiar predicament, and one that would entitle any man to the use of strong language.

After a delay of a few seconds, Cloud took our thoughts rudely from the Fifth Dimension by offering an unexpected suggestion. "Mr.—Mr. Wormwood," he ventured, diffidently, "you have made a long journey. You must be hungry. Wouldn't you like some refreshments?"

"Refreshments?" demanded Wormwood, looking puzzled. "What are refreshments?"

"You mean to say you don't know? Things to eat. Food," explained Cloud, in a chastened voice.

"Then why didn't you say so? What a queer-sounding word, refreshments! I suppose, though, it was commonly used in the Neurotic Age, when they needed plenty of things to freshen them up. Yes, thank you, I'll have some, if you don't mind. I haven't eaten since the twenty-third century."

"There's never much in this place, but I'll get what I can," promised Cloud, as he began to ransack the cupboard at one end of the room which served him for kitchen and pantry.

A few moments later, he had managed to produce two good solid-looking ham sandwiches, which he set with an apologetic air before our guest.

For a hungry man, Wormwood showed a surprising reluctance about setting to work on these morsels. A questioning glitter came into his eyes; his slender nostrils were wrinkled as if in distaste; his thin lips curled with an expression dangerously close to a sneer. With dainty, almost timid gestures he began fingering the sandwiches; appraisingly he drew one of them apart and gazed down at the slim red slice of meat; then, with a critical air, he lifted the ham toward him, and sniffed at it anxiously. And all at once he uttered a cry of disgust, and shoved the food from him as though it were something loathsome.

Never had I admired the manners of the man from tomorrow, but it seemed to me that such boorishness passed all excusable limits.

"Why, what's the matter?" demanded Cloud, stepping forward to examine the rejected food. "Anything wrong with the sandwiches?"

"Anything wrong?" echoed Wormwood, as though he had been insulted. "What abnominable filth have you offered me? Surely, I could not have been mistaken! It is flesh!—the disguised burnt flesh of a fellow-animal!"

"Why, it's only—it's only ham!" gasped Cloud, too

amazed for words. "Surely, you're not—you're not a Hebrew, are you?—your religion doesn't forbid you to eat pork?"

"Religion?" raged Cloud. "What an idea! Who told you there is any religion left in the twenty-third century? No, I haven't any religion. I'm just an ordinary, sober, self-respecting citizen. Like all other right-thinking men, I detest cannibalism!"

"Cannibalism?" we all repeated, and stared at one another in astonishment, thinking that the man from tomorrow had queer ideas of a jest.

"What's wrong in saying I detest cannibalism?" Wormwood raged, while glaring at us with accusing eyes. . . .

But all at once a light seemed to burst upon him. "Ah! I had forgotten! In the twentieth century, the whole civilized world was cannibalistic. It was before the Moral Awakening, when men first perceived the monstrousness of preying upon their fellow creatures. Of course! Of course! I should have remembered! After all, I shouldn't blame you for your barbarian habits—you really don't know any better."

"So people in your own age never eat meat?" I asked.

"Eat what? What was that word? Meat? How revolting! You mean, the flesh and blood of our brother mammals? Do you think we're tigers—or wolves? Can't you understand?—the twenty-third century is an enlightened era!"

"Then no one ever—ever touches flesh?" Dr. Horn inquired, incredulously.

"Oh, I won't say no one ever does. Sometimes some degenerate does show an atavistic liking for the ancestral fare. There are hospitals, of course, for such pathological cases. But, fortunately, such cases are very rare."

"Well, I for one am thankful I don't live in the twenty-third century," I muttered, sure that my taste for beefsteak would have landed me in a sanitarium.

"Seeing that you're a vegetarian, Mr. Wormwood," declared Cloud, gloomily, "I'm afraid I haven't anything in the place for you. You came here on such short notice, you see. Guess I'd better go out to round up something——"

"In that case, I'll go with you," the man from tomorrow decided. "Being here now, whether I want to be or not, I might as well make the best of things and have a look at the twentieth century."

Cloud's face was darkened with sudden embarrassment. "But Mr. Wormwood, you can't go out on the street—in those clothes," he stammered, with a gesture toward the abbreviated costume of our visitor.

"What's the matter with my clothes?" demanded Wormwood, in an affronted manner. "You don't want me to go without them, do you?"

"Well, let's see now—let's see," faltered our host, with a troubled expression. "I have an extra suit—though it's even more of a rag than the one I'm wearing. Or maybe—if you'll stay here a while—I'll be able to borrow some money, and buy you a suit."

"What?" bawled the man from tomorrow. "Buy me a suit? Me wear one of those twentieth century uniforms? Hide the beautiful body that nature has given me! Put a fence around my neck, and a hothouse about my chest! Check the circulation, accumulate the perspiration! Debar the sunlight and make myself miserable and unhealthy—and all for what? No, never! Never will I imprison myself in such irrational garb!"

"Really, Mr. Wormwood," I explained, in a halting manner, "really, it's necessary—if you want to appear on the street. Indeed, it's quite necessary—if you're to retain your self-respect."

"Self-respect?" cried our visitor, his thin fists clenched, his nostrils quivering with rage. "That's just the point! I have too much self-respect to make a monkey of myself!"

Whereupon, turning once more to Cloud, he shrilled, "Sir, I insist—I insist that you take me out on the street with you! I will go clad as I am now—and in no other way! I am hungry—and I ask you to give me food! I am curious to see this age—and I demand that you help me to see it!"

These words were uttered in such authoritative, determined tones that one might have thought Cloud a six-year-old and Wormwood his father. I was therefore delighted to observe with what courage the inventor resisted the insolence of his guest. "My dear friend," he maintained, "I have told you what I intend doing, and I will not go back on my word. I will not permit you to accompany me out of this house—not unless you are clothed more suitably. If you will but wait a while——"

"I will not wait!" flashed back the man from tomorrow. "Not one moment will I wait! Make ready to accompany me—or else take care!"

Into Wormwood's eyes there had come a passionate, fiery light,—a blaze that frightened me I did not know why, so earnest and intense was it and so charged with suggestions of evil.

"Take care!" he repeated, with an angry vehemence. "You do not know with what you are meddling! I give you a final chance! Heed my request! Else you shall see—you shall see what the twenty-third century can do!"

Cloud trembled slightly; his lips flickered; he raised his hand fearfully before his face, as though to ward off some nameless peril. But, when he spoke, his tones were steady, and there was resolution in his glance. "You have heard my answer," he said.

Instantly the hand of Wormwood darted into the inner folds of his garment, and emerged with a glittering pointed object smaller than a toy pistol. Before we had had time to observe its nature, there came a flash of green light accompanied by a low droning sound; and, to our consternation, Cloud uttered a groan and sank to the floor.

Thinking that he had been killed, Dr. Horn and I sprang to his side and bent over him frantically. So still and silent did he lie that for a moment we retained the impression that he was dead. But, as we rubbed his hands and loosened his clothing, we observed with astonishment that there was no sign of a bullet wound. And, after a minute, we were reassured to see him open his eyes and move his lips in puzzled questioning.

"Have no fear for him," we heard the voice of the man from tomorrow, in slow, matter-of-fact tones. "He is not really hurt. But his entire body below the neck is paralyzed, and will remain paralyzed for twenty-four hours, after which he will recover. I simply wanted to teach him that it is bad policy to defy me. Fortunately, I happened to have a little phial of the inter-molecular G-rays in my pocket. Our hyper-space observatory is in a lonely place, you see, and I always keep some of the rays with me for possible use against marauders or wild beasts. Its effect, as our scientists discovered by experiments on volunteers, is to check the operations of the nervous system by an instantaneous action, like that of a powerful poison or drug."

Paying little heed to these words, Dr. Horn and I lifted the sufferer to the couch, upon which we laid him as gently as we could.

With a bewildered expression, he looked up at us; and, as he did so, his lips trembled into slow speech:

"I don't know what's come over me. I really don't know. I seemed to feel a stunning blow, then everything went black. It doesn't hurt any, but most of my body is as numb as if it wasn't there."

"Now you can see what comes of being reckless!" reprimanded the man from tomorrow, as he bent over the couch with a warning finger. "Consider yourself lucky! Had I used a stronger charge, you might have been paralyzed for a week."

Then, turning to Dr. Horn and myself with a commanding gesture, he continued, almost with military brusqueness:

"I trust you two men have also learned caution! You may profit from your friend's example! Come with me! I want you to show me the twentieth century you are so proud of!"

"Not now! Please, not now!" I protested, keeping one eye fastened upon Wormwood, while with the other I glanced at my watch. "God! It's almost nine o'clock! My wife will be nearly crazy that I haven't come home to supper!"

"Almost nine o'clock?" echoed Dr. Horn, with a groan.

"Why, I'd forgotten all about time! How will I ever explain to Alice? I was to have called to take her to the theatre!"

The man from tomorrow merely grinned. "You'll have to solve those little problems as best as you can," he decided, with a shrug.

"Come! are you ready? I'm getting anxious to see the twentieth century."

"But tomorrow! Won't tomorrow do just as well?" pleaded Dr. Horn, almost desperately. "I really must rush off to my fiancée——"

"And my wife—she'll never forgive me!" I chimed in, shuddering at the thought of many a difficult moment to come.

"Tomorrow—I promise you—tomorrow I'll be at your service!"

"Oh, these women—the way they did interfere in the twentieth century!" muttered Wormwood. "But, of course, I can't accept any such excuse. For the last time, I ask you, are you ready? If so, we'd better be getting along!"

By way of emphasizing these words, our visitor again drew forth the little pistol-like contrivance that had so effectively silenced Cloud's protest.

At the sight of this implement, we realized the futility of further arguments. Cursing the evil fortune that had brought us face to face with a man from tomorrow; groaning at the thought of the superior science that had subdued us and at the cruel advantage that our guest had taken of us; shaken with misgivings for the future and fearful lest we should end in jail or in a madhouse, we signified our submission and dolefully accompanied Wormwood out of the room and down the long stairs to the street.

As he passed through the dorway, we cast a last sad glance back at Cloud, who was gazing lugubriously at us from his helpless berth on the couch. "We can't leave him here like this!" I protested. "Who is to take care of him in our absence?"

But the man from to-morrow answered airily, "Oh, he won't need any care. The G-rays will induce pleasant sleep."

And then, as he forced Dr. Horn and me to walk one on each side of him, in the attentive manner of old friends, he burst into a low chuckle, he enthused:

"Do you know, I think, after all, I'm going to enjoy the twentieth century! It was really such a queer period of history, when everybody did such funny things!

"I believe I'll like it better than a farce comedy!"

And he slapped his knee with a puny hand, and broke into the gayest laughter we had yet heard from his lips.

CHAPTER VI

A Tour of Inspection

AS WE descended to the pavement in company with the man from tomorrow, Dr. Horn and I were relieved to find the street comparatively deserted. Before us, in garish multitudes, glared the long even rows of arc-lights; above us loomed the monotonously regular files of the six-story tenements; while the heavens, as usual, were obscured with the smoke and dust of the city.

"Ah, how glad I am to be out!" exclaimed the man from tomorrow, flinging his bare arms skyward as if in ecstasy. "What a strange scene! How unreal it all looks! It reminds me of some curious antique prints I have seen! And so this is how people lived before the Reign of Sanitation?"

"Reign of Sanitation?" I demanded.

"Exactly! You surely don't call it sanitary to live in brick cages without air or sunlight?" inquired our visitor, as we walked slowly down the street. "Do you notice the abominable reek in the air? If it weren't so historic, it would be insufferable!"

I sniffed the air appraisingly, but could notice nothing unusual.

"By the way, what city is this?" continued Wormwood. . . . "New York, you say? I believe that was one of the seaboard cities of the United States in the Neurotic Age? Yes, to be sure! That was before the second Interoceanic War! New York used to be considered an important little place, I understand. . . . Well, well, it's interesting to be walking on the site of ancient cities!"

As the man from tomorrow uttered these words, we set out together across a street—which came near to being the last street he crossed in this century. An automobile, moving at a reckless pace, shot suddenly around a corner; and our visitor whose gaze was cast upward at the top stories of the tenements, would certainly have been struck had not Dr. Horn flung out a saving hand and dragged him out of danger.

Shaken by this experience, we reached the pavement, where Wormwood began to ply us with indignant questions. "By all the constellations! what infernal machine was that? What do you mean by exposing visitors to diabolical attacks? Can't a man even cross the street without fear of martyrdom? Surely, you don't allow lunatics to go raging at large! Or was it a deliberate attempt to kill me? Never, never have I been treated with such lack of consideration!"

Doing our best to check the ravings of the man from tomorrow, we informed him that what he had seen was only a motor car.

"Motor car? Motor car? he repeated after us, by no means pacified. "I don't know what you mean!"

"Well, there's another one over there," explained Dr. Horn, pointing to a taxicab cruising along the street.

The cab driver, thinking that Dr. Horn was signalling to him, stopped short within arm's grasp—and so Wormwood had his first clear view of a modern automobile.

"Oh, now I see! So that's what they are!" he cried, with an air of sudden enlightment. "Of course! I should have known! Haven't I observed them often enough in museums? They're the carriages that used to clutter the streets of cities before the general adoption of air-transportation. They used to poison the atmosphere with carbon monoxide gas, so that it is estimated that, in the latter part of the Neurotic Age, a million persons a year fell dead from asphixiation on city streets. Oh, yes, I understand all about them!"

So speaking, the man from tomorrow chuckled be-

neath his breath, as though enjoying some rare and secret joke.

"What cumbrous-looking affairs they are!" he continued, as one of the magnificent Reels-Royal Sedans went gliding past. "So grotesque and ponderous! I wonder that they're permitted by the Department of Public Esthetics! And what noises they make! They remind me of wild beasts in a menagerie! I see now why this is the Neurotic Age!"

I had already opened my mouth to reply—when a more important subject demanded our attention. Until the present moment, the freakish apparel of the man from tomorrow had aroused but little notice, since we had been walking in the obscurity of a side-street; but now all at once we had arrived at the corner of a brilliantly lighted avenue, where streams of people were drifting back and forth before the glaring shop windows.

"Ah!" exclaimed our companion, his eyes wide with wonder. "How odd! Just the place for me!"

And, despite my frantic efforts to restrain him, he started off down the avenue.

No one can imagine what I felt at that critical moment. Here was I, a respectable college professor, who all his life had never been known to depart from the path of sobriety!—yet now all at once, through no fault of my own, I must appear in public in company with a half-dressed clown, and be subjected to the jeers and taunts of the multitude! How could I be able to face my classes tomorrow if the facts were to become known?

At that thought, a terrible sinking sensation overcame me, and I was tempted once more to revolt. Necessity being the mother of recklessness, I conceived an idea; slouching a pace or two behind my new-made master, I toyed with some wild notion of dashing into a sheltering doorway and escaping.

But the man from tomorrow was quick to divine my strategy. "Step to my side, sir!" he commanded, with an angry glance in my direction. "And don't ever let me see you trying that again—not unless you'd enjoy being paralyzed!"

There being nothing else to do, I sighed and meekly obeyed orders, my short-lived hopes of freedom cast aside.

Already, although we had turned into the avenue but a moment ago, I was conscious of the attention we were receiving. Two painted-lipped girls paused at the corner, pointed to our companion and giggled; several passing men stopped short to peer at us before continuing on their way with loud guffaws; a small child, led by its mother's hand, burst into a tittering exclamation, "Oh, Mamma, look at the man in the funny night-gown!"

Feeling that I should have liked to sink into the earth and disappear, I saw the bright lights of a momentary haven looming before us. "Alschuler's Restaurant" I read on an electric sign; and though I had little doubt but that it would prove an atrocious eating-place, I was thankful to grasp at the temporary refuge it offered. "Come," I suggested to my lord and leader. "Let's all have a bite before seeing the town."

To this proposal the man from tomorrow replied with an appropriate "Very good!", and immediately gave proof of his interest by the haste with which he sought the restaurant.

Fortunately,,we were able to procure a private booth, although some of the customers borishly left their tables to stare at us as we entered, and the head waiter peered at us so peculiarly that nothing, except the secret passage of a bit of paper, seemed able to prevent our immediate ejection.

It would be painful to dwell upon the details of that meal, which was probably the most embarrassing I ever attempted to consume. When the soup was brought on, the man from tomorrow took one sniff, and then shoved it from him with a disgusted expression, "Ugh! Some of that vile beast-flesh is in it!" When the salad arrived, saturated with French dressing, he sampled one lettuce leaf, and promptly called to the waiter, "Sir! take this out, wash it off thoroughly, and then bring it back unadulterated!" When the fish appeared, he merely made a grimace of repulsion, looked away and offered us his portion; when the waiter asked whether he wished his coffee with his meal or later, he appeared puzzled and learned with evident surprise that coffee was a beverage. Afterwards, sampling the drink, he made a wry face and declared that it was "bitter enough for a medicine"; and finally, having explored the bill of fare and found nothing to please him, he made a meal of bread and milk, with which he declared himself well satisfied.

During the repast, Dr. Horn and I made repeated attempts to reach the telephone booth, which was located at the further end of the restaurant; but our guest, thinking that we were planning to escape, resolutely checked all our efforts. "I don't know what you mean by telephone booths," he declared, suspiciously. "What is a telephone? In the twenty-third century, each man carries his own small radio set, enabling him to send messages home at any time."

It now appeared certain that I should not be able to communicate with my wife for hours yet. Restlessly tapping my knees in my nervousness and fidgeting in my chair like a three-year-old, I was barely able to touch my food, while I vainly tried to imagine the sort of reception I should receive, when at last I reached home.

Dr. Horn, likewise, seemed occupied with solemn meditations. He too was hardly able to eat; his stern, intellectual face, normally thin and long, looked even longer and thinner than usual. Every now and then he would shake his head dolefully, and mutter, "This is going to put me in a terrible position with Alice. Do you think, Professor, she will believe my absence wasn't deliberate? How am I ever going to explain?"

"Better not explain at all," finally suggested the man from tomorrow, smiling a helpful smile. "You'd have to tell the truth, and I've found that truthful explanations cause trouble."

Having offered this advice, Wormwood announced himself finished with his bread and milk; and, permitting me to settle matters with the waiter, rose jauntily to leave.

It was only when we were again upon the street that our real troubles commenced. Disregarding the combined pleas of Dr. Horn and myself, the man from tomorrow remained inflexibly determined to haunt the brightest and most frequented thoroughfares. "How am I to see the twentieth century," he demanded, "if I am to confine myself to side streets?" And so, with the two of us trailing at his side, he sauntered merrily along the avenue; while, as if his appearance were not attracting sufficient attention, he filled the intervals between conversation by humming snatches of some queer tune—a jerky, unmelodious tune which I had never heard before, and which struck my ears as unpleasantly as would Chinese music.

"That is the work of Manowsky—one of the greatest of twenty-third century composers," he explained, in response to Dr. Horn's questions.

I wish that I could draw a veil over the moments that followed. I wish that I could erase from memory the shame and horror of that harassing interval, when I was shocked and humiliated as never before in this life. But alas! the recollection of those torments is ingrained too deeply ever to be blotted out; it returns

A small pistol-like object appeared; there was a droning sound, a flash of greenish light, a second flash, then a third—and three successive members of the mob groaned and sank helplessly to the ground.

to me even now in nightmares; it galls and scourges me, even though it has become no more than the figment of a bewildering adventure. . . . But let me proceed. Let me record how people paused to stare and gape at us; how some smiled or snickered, and others openly mocked; how a crowd, led by some half-grown ragamuffins, began to form at our heels, hooting and howling, and roaring a ribald something about bathing costumes; how gradually the mob deepened, until we found ourselves in the center of a veritable multitude, which walled us about on all sides, as though we were a circus exhibition, until those on the outer edges of the throng had to struggle to get a glimpse of us.

How describe the feeling of mortification that was overwhelming me? How depict my horror when, amid the surging demons that had closed in about us, I thought I recognized the faces of two of my college students, who, I felt sure, would broadcast the news of my disgrace? Or how express my shocked anger and dismay at the raillery that was filling the air about us? "What is he? A living freak? A wild man from from Madagascar? . . . New style in undershirts! . . . Say, did you get a glimpse at the bathing beauty?"; while, from the borders of the crowd, a childish voice would be heard, "Look at the crazy man!", or "Oh, Ma, take me to see the circus!" Such exclamations, and others of a far more irritating type, all of them in lamentably bad taste and some of them too vulgar to bear repetition, were raining upon us in uproarious showers; and meantime the throng was growing at such a rate that, it seemed to me, it would soon constitute a menace to traffic.

At first the man from to-morrow stared at this curious rabble with a good-natured amusement. He seemed pleased to be the center of so much attention; he was grateful for what he termed the opportunity "of judging the twentieth century animal at first hand"; he passed various, interested comments upon the looks and apparel of the spectators; he remarked calmly that most of the faces were of a degenerate type indicating the uneugenic nature of the age; he decided that, being burdened with an excess of clothes, they were all weighed down with repressions and complexes, which made them look "a little strained and inhuman." . . . "Oh, that I were back in my own age!" he sighed. "Any newspaper would pay a thousand tantrums for the story of my visit here!"

But gradually, as the crowd increased, Wormwood's interest in his observers diminished. They began hedging him in too closely; they began to take undesired familiarities, to press against him or to pat him in an intimate manner on the back or shoulders; they began to obscure his view of the streets and the buildings; they even presumed to pass jokes concerning his small stature, calling him a "dwarf," a "midget," and a "runt." And thus, perhaps without intending to, they irritated him beyond all measure.

Sudden and surprising was his transformation from smiling good humor to bristling defiance. "So? You think I'm small? You think I'm small, do you?" he roared, in a voice that could be heard above the din of the street traffic. "You pygmy creatures of a pygmy age! If any of you could come to my times, where men are measured by their brains, you would look tinier than fleas! Be gone, all of you! Cease annoying me! Can't you leave a Superman to go his way in peace?"

Naturally, the only effect of these words was to produce renewed laughter. "The Superman! See the Superman! Make way for the Superman!" jeered the multitude, which, with hilarious mockery, commenced to press about their victim more tightly than ever.

"Begone!" repeated Wormwood, in the same thundering tones as before. "Begone, I advise you! Can't you understand English? This is my last warning! Leave me alone, or it will not be well with you!"

But the crowd, laughing more tumultuously than ever, ringed their entertainer about more closely still, and showed no intention of dispersing.

Then it was that a startling thing occurred. The hand of the man from to-morrow was seen to reach suddenly into his garment; a small pistol-like object appeared; there was a droning sound, a flash of greenish light, a second flash, then a third—and three successive members of the mob groaned and sank helplessly to the ground.

The laughter of the multitude had ceased. A wide gap was opened as the spectators, pale-faced and shuddering, gaped at the victims and withdrew as though Wormwood were the bearer of a plague. Confused cries issued from their midst; there was a movement of panic, and a stampeding of heavy forms; men shoved and pushed their fellows savagely in the effort to escape; the shriek of a woman and the moan of a wounded youth added to the confusion; while Wormwood, seizing my right arm and Dr. Horn's left, started off past the rabble and down the street as nonchalantly as though nothing in particular had occurred.

CHAPTER VII

In the Toils of the Law

"I REALLY don't see what the excitement was all about," remarked the man from tomorrow, as he led Dr. Horn and myself slowly away. "What is there so strange about me? Have the people of this age never looked on bare arms or legs before? I didn't know there was anything unusual about my skin."

He paused, and regarded his exposed limbs quizzically; then hastily proceeded, "It isn't as if I were huge and ungainly, like most of the men of this age. The majority of your countrymen, I observe, are giants—over five and a half feet in height! and there are some monsters that must be six feet and even more! Now, in my own century, five feet and one inch is considered the proper height for a man. It has been this way ever since the Interoceanic wars, which reduced the average stature—"

How much longer Wormwood continued in this vein I do not know, for neither Dr. Horn nor I were listening. Our attention was attracted toward a spot to our rear, where some interesting developments were in progress. We saw that we were by no means free of the mob, as we had thought; despite the paralysis of three persons and the ensuing panic, there were still many who seemed unwilling to lose sight of us, and who trailed behind us in little slinking groups at a safe distance. In addition, the attention of fresh passers-by, who knew nothing of the events of a few moments ago, was gravitating toward us at such a rate that it would be only a matter of minutes before we were again the center of a rabble.

Accordingly, I made a hasty suggestion to the man from tomorrow. "Don't you think we'd better take a taxi? Otherwise, we'll have no end of trouble."

"Taxi?" he demanded. "What's that? . . . Oh, you mean one of those funny-looking little carts? The kind that race through the streets trying to murder honest people? No, thank you! I have a perfect horror of dying in the twentieth century. However, maybe there happens to be an airport near? If you can charter a triplane—"

This was as far as the speaker could proceed. Emerging from the throng to our rear, I saw two blue-frocked club-wielding individuals, who sent a cold shiver down my spine. And, at the side of these representatives of

law and order, a little man in plain clothes was running in screaming excitement. "That's them! There they are! Dangerous lunatics! The whole three of them! Killed five men! Grab them, before they get away!".

"Better watch out," I whispered to the man from tomorrow. "The police are after us."

"The police had better watch out!" he muttered, reaching into his pocket for the paralyzing rays.

"For God's sawe, don't try anything like that!" warned Dr. Horn, in a voice of horror. "If you do—"

I dread to think what would have happened had the man from tomorrow carried out his intention and struck down the two officers of the law. Fortunately, Dr. Horn's words caused him to hesitate for just the fracture of a second; and that brief hesitation was all-important, since it gave one of the policemen time to steal forward and to clasp his arms about Wormwood's slender form.

In the officer's powerful grip, our companion was helpless as a babe; it was only a few seconds before the handcuffs had rattled about his wrists.

Reduced thus to impotence, he made up in rage for what he lacked in physical power. "Let me go! I'll have you punished! I'll report you to the Head Triumvirate! By all the stars in the firmament, what sort of an age is this? You no sooner get a man from an enlightened era, than you act as if he wants to steal your century! Let loose those disgraceful bonds from my hands, or I vow—as surely as I come from another dimension, I vow it!—you will live to regret your impudence!"

Hearty laughter was his response. Some one tapped his head significantly; some one else, from deep in the rear, let forth a mocking howl, "The Superman! He still thinks he's the Superman! Listen to the Superman talk!" And renewed ripples of merriment sounded from the gathering swarms of spectators.

At this juncture, on an unfortunate impulse, it occurred to me to say something on behalf of the victim. Small as was my liking for the man from tomorrow, I thought that after all he was entitled to some consideration as the sole known visitor from another age; moreover, I feared that science would lose invaluable opportunities for investigation could we find no better lodging for him than a jail.

"Officer—hold one minute!" I cried. "Aren't you making a mistake? You don't understand. If you'll give me a chance to explain—"

"Explain! Explain! Let him explain to the judge!" some one burst forth, in hooting derision. He's another of the gang!"

"And he too!" contributed a second member of the mob, designating Dr. Horn. "They're all in together! All three of them! I saw them working together the whole time!"

To my unspeakable shame and horror, the policemen accepted this distorted version of the affair. Never had any man better occasion to deplore the poor judgment of our officers of justice! With such speed that I hardly had time to realize what was happening, I felt a pair of cold steel fetters clattering about my wrists; I saw that Dr. Horn, too, was being seized and shackled; and I heard my captor's voice thundering in my ear, "You'd both better come along as accessories before the crime!"

"But what have I done, sir?" I demanded; while, in my mortification, I must have blushed to the very tip of my fingers. "What have I done?"

The only heed my captor took was to mutter, grimly, "You've done enough to be pulled in! The rest you can tell in court!"

As his voice subsided, there came the dry, critical comment of the man from tomorrow, who, apparently, had forgotten his anger in assuming the rôle of an aloof observer. "How primitive! How primitive! What barbarian methods of punishment they employed in the twentieth century!"

The outburst of laughter that greeted these words was cut short by the bells of the patrol wagon, which was arriving in noisy haste. Imagine my rage and despair when I was ordered into this vehicle! Imagine my exasperation to hear the jeers of the mobs, and to see the ring of idiotic faces that gaped up at me in mockery! Yet, despite the tumult of my emotions, I had time for a glance at the man from tomorrow, who preceded me into the wagon with a grimace of utmost distaste. "Is this ride considered part of the punishment?" he asked, as we started to move away along the avenue. "As an ingenious means of torture, it is far from bad!" . . .

During the following minutes, instead of meditating upon the fate that awaited him, he busied himself with trivial chatter. Every time the wagon gave a jolt or a jerk, he would make a wry face and remark how uncomfortable it was to live in an age before the invention of automatic friction-destroyers. Every time we reached an intersection and had to wait for the traffic signals, he would declare that there were only two civilized ways to travel—in the air, and underground. Every time the horns of some passing motor dinned in his ears, he would wince as if he had been struck, and would observe that were he forced to remain with us for a few years, he would probably become as neurotic as our best citizens. Never once did the seriousness of his predicament—or of ours—seem to occur to him; but on and on he babbled, mistaking our best apartment houses for barracks or inquiring why the glare of the electric signs and the shop windows was not prohibited by law—until, in the end, I fervently wished that he had been gagged as well as handcuffed.

At last, fortunately his garrulousness was ended by our arrival at our destination. I had had visions of being led directly to a cell, where I would have to remain amid the ruffians and the vermin; yet, although I was to be spared this fate, it was not vastly preferable to being bundled out of the patrol and into one of those night-courts, where the city's human wastage comes to trial.

As we entered the court-room, I observed that it was fairly well crowded; and as the officers shoved my companions and myself to seats at one side, I was relieved to find that our coming caused much less attention than we had aroused elsewhere. Was it that freakish sights were mere commonplaces here?

A long, long period of waiting ensued. Even more than the ride in the patrol car, or the encounter with the mob, this constituted the real ordeal of the evening. No man could have been more nervous than I as, still in handcuffs, I writhed and twisted between Dr. Horn and one of the policemen. With the feeling of one over whom a sword is dangling, I watched the judge decide the cases ahead of ours; nor was my apprehension relieved by the discovery that that official, a bespectacled man of about forty, whose features seemed vaguely familiar, was almost savagely severe in his decisions. First came a roisterer charged with creating a disturbance while drunk, and there followed the snapping judgment, "Thirty days!"; then came a painted woman of an all-too-recognizable type, upon whom the magistrate scowled while bellowing, "Sixty days this time, Maggie!"; then came a youth accused of precipitating a street brawl and resisting an officer, and we heard the roaring sentence, "A hundred dollars fine or a hundred days!" Case after case was disposed of in rapid order; and always, I observed, the judgment was "Guilty", while, as time went by, the penalties seemed to be growing constantly more severe.

What should I do, I wondered, if I too were adjudged guilty? How face the humiliation of being sentenced by the night-court? Vague thoughts of suicide came to me as I noticed several newspaper reporters scribbling within arm's length; and thoughts of worse than suicide harassed me as I considered the scandal were my arrest to become known at the University. "Savant spends night in jail," I read in imagination in the headlines. "Professor Howard taken in street raid." Well I knew how the heads of gossips would nod! How my students would whisper among themselves! How I should be called to the President's Office, or perhaps before the Board of Regents to explain. At the least, should I not have to resign my professorship? For who would now consider me a fitting moral guide for the young? It was hard, exceedingly hard, I reflected, to have worked for forty years to build myself a respectable position, and now all at once to be discredited and disgraced owing to a visitor from another dimension.

While such meditations absorbed me, the man from tomorrow was watching the court proceedings with the interest of a spectator at a play. He seemed to have forgotten his shackled hands; he seemed to be giving no thought to his impending sentence; he leaned far forward in his seat, and his blue eyes glittered with amusement as the judge decided case after case. "They should not have a judge in this court! They should have a psychiatrist!" he whispered to Dr. Horn, in tones loud enough for every one to overhear: whereupon the magistrate stopped short in the middle of a sentence and glared at Wormwood with such stern rebuking eyes that I felt that the man from tomorrow had forfeited any chance he might have had for a lenient verdict.

At last, after ages and ages of suspense, our turn for trial arrived. Trembling in every limb and muscle, I stood between Wormwood and Dr. Horn before the bar of justice; while one of the officers, towering to our right, loudly proclaimed the charge.

"Disorderly conduct and indecent exposure!" he announced, designating the man from tomorrow. "In the other two cases, disorderly conduct and inciting to riot! When I first saw the defendants—"

And the officers went on to declare our various sins and derelictions in no uncertain language.

To my surprise, the judge paid no apparent heed. Instead, his gaze was fastened upon me with a strange scrutiny. There was such a prying interest, such a puzzled questioning in his watery gray eyes, that I squirmed and writhed inwardly; I wondered whether he regarded me as a particularly interesting species of offender, an unusual example of the criminal type. What was my astonishment, accordingly, when a sudden smile broke out upon his face!—and when, turning to one of my accusers, he bawled:

"Officer Murphy, haven't you made a mistake?"

Officer Murphy looked startled. "Why, Your Honor," he gasped, "what—what mistake could there be?"

"Unfetter that man at once!" commanded the magistrate. "And, after this, be more careful whom you lay your clumsy hands on!"

"Very well, Your Honor," acquiesced the bewildered agent of the law, as he mercifully freed me from my handcuffs.

Feeling like a hero in a fairy story, who has been saved in the nick of time by a guardian angel, I stared uncomprehendingly at the judge.

And now, surprise of surprises! The dignity of the bench was violated! The hand of His Honor shot down toward mine! "Glad to see you again, Professor!" he declared, heartily. And, while I gaped at him in a bewildered way, he leaned down to me, and whispered, "I didn't recognize you at first. Don't suppose you recognize me, either. No wonder! I was in one of your classes in physics, way back in nineteen nine. Science wasn't my long suit, but you let me through anyhow. It surely is a pleasure to see you once more!"

As I glanced about me at the leering spectators, at the grinning man from tomorrow and at my assistant glowering in handcuffs, I thought that I could have imagined more delightful circumstances for a reunion.

"I'm sure you're here by some stupid mistake, Professor," continued His Honor, in secretive tones. "Such things do happen, you know—the officers lose their heads now and then and pick on the wrong man. You'd better tell me all about it. No need to assure me you weren't willingly in such company as that."

With a disdainful gesture, the judge designated the man from tomorrow.

"No, not willingly—but he was in my company just the same," volunteered the man from tomorrow.

"Silence! Answer when you're spoken to!" thundered the judge. And then, turning to me, "What a strange, heavy sort of speech that man has! Shouldn't be surprised if he'd been drinking. Well, Professor, now let's hear your story."

For a moment I was silent. It occurred to me that the last thing I could state was the truth—were I to declare that our visitor was from the twenty-third century, would the judge not believe my mind enfeebled by age? And so I set about to invent a tale. If I faltered over the first few words, interspersing the syllables with hems and haws innumerable, the judge probably laid the blame to a natural embarrassment; for he smiled indulgently down upon me, and seemed to have no suspicion of my predicament.

Encouraged by his friendliness, I was not long in collecting my thoughts and launching forth upon a fluent narrative.

"Your Honor," I reported, "I greatly deplore the necessity of being seen in public along with this gentleman, Mr. Wormwood. No one could be less in favor than I of his unconventional apparel. The fact is, Your Honor, that he has been a subject for experimental study at the University by my assistant Dr. Horn and myself. You see him now—er—in his laboratory costume. He has not been, I fear, quite right in his head of late; he has some very strange ideas which I beg you not to heed. I will not say he has not—well, an excessive fondness for the flask. This evening, when he ran off down the street in his present undress, what could Dr. Horn and I do but follow him and attempt to bring him back? Unfortunately, his appearance called forth a mob, whose company he so enjoyed that it was impossible for us to do anything with him. It was in the effort to explain these matters to the officers that Dr. Horn and I were apprehended."

His Honor scowled severely in the direction of Officer Murphy. "Ever let me catch you making a mistake like this again, and I'll have you demoted!" his angry eyes appeared to say. But to me he declared, "I understand, Professor. I understand. Everything is explained."

"Thank you, Your Honor," I acknowledged, bowing.

"Oh, you think everything is explained, do you?" mocked the man from tomorrow, with a reckless disregard for the rules of court procedure. "Then will you please tell me how it was that I could paralyze three men?"

The judge rapped for order, and glared savagely at Wormwood. "For the last time, I ask you to be silent!" he roared. "Otherwise, I'll commit you for contempt!"

The man from tomorrow opened his mouth, but said no other word; yet there was amusement rather than fear in his glance.

Turning to the policeman, the magistrate inquired,

"Officer Murphy, what was this nonsense about paralyzing three men?"

"Why, I really don't know, Your Honor," declared Officer Murphy. "That is, I don't know except what I heard."

"What was that?"

The policeman hesitated. "Well, it's this way, Your Honor. The man that summoned me said something about some queer sort of pistol being discharged with a blaze of green light. Five men—or maybe ten—fell down and couldn't move again. I have the witness here to tell about it himself."

Low titters of amusement were rippling around the court-room, and the judge had to hammer again for order. "Officer Murphy," he cried, in tones of thunder, "you should know better than to repeat such a tale!"

"Well, I wasn't saying I believed it, Your Honor," apologized Officer Murphy, with a crestfallen look. "Just the same, the witness is here, if you want to hear him—"

"There is no need for such stories to be heard again!" bellowed the judge, bringing his clenched fist down before him with finality.

His face now assumed a thoughtful expression; and, with an inquiring air, he turned to me, "Well, Professor, what do you think we'd better do with this man?—this Mr. Woodworm, or whatever you call him. The law about indecent exposure, of course, is clear enough. Still, I don't know that his looks are so much indecent as—well, unconventional. He hasn't done any real harm, and if you thought you could guarantee——"

"Why, yes, Your Honor," I caught up, seeing a sudden avenue of hope. "While I can't be absolutely responsible for him, I would do my best. His conduct may strike you as erratic, but I assure you he is not dangerous. If you would permit me, I should be glad to lodge him in my own house tonight, and would try to see—"

"Good!" approved the judge. "The very thing! You may take him home at once, Professor. Call a taxi, of course, so that there will be no more street scenes. By tomorrow, I trust, he will—er—have sufficiently recovered to appear fully clothed."

"I will do what I can," I promised, not attempting to relieve His Honor of the idea that the man from tomorrow was drunk.

"Excellent!" bawled the judge. . . . "Case dismissed!"

As we filed out of the court-room, we could see that all eyes were fastened upon us with twinkling glances. It was with the utmost relief that Dr. Horn and I summoned a taxicab, after we had been unshackled, and, at the risk of being paralyzed, pushed the man from tomorrow into it, and gave the driver my home address.

CHAPTER VIII

A Lodging for the Night

WHEN eventually I reached home, it lacked just a few minutes of midnight. I was greeted by a distracted wife, who fell into my arms with tears and lamentations, and mingled her sobs of relief with reproaches at my long absence. "Where under heaven were you?" she demanded, when her first paroxysms of emotion had subsided. "Oh, Ellery, where, where were you? Why didn't you let me hear from you? I thought you had been killed! Why, I must have called up every hospital in town! . . . None of them could give me any news!"

"I have had a very unusual experience, my dear," was all I was able to say—when all at once her eyes fell upon the man from to-morrow.

"Gracious, Ellery, what have we here?" she exclaimed, in a nerve-wracked manner. "What have we here? Why, the poor man! What has happened to his clothes?"

"He, why—er—er—he has had a slight accident," I attempted to explain, not quite certain what to say. "You—you mustn't mind his looks. He's a traveler—er—from far away. He's a little mixed up about our customs. I've asked him to stay for the night. Dr. Horn and I have been taking charge of him. I just left Dr. Horn at the door."

"You—you don't mean to say he's going to stay here!" gasped my poor wife, overwhelmed at this news. And I am sure that, had I not taken her consolingly into my arms, the tears would have come in torrents.

At this juncture the man from tomorrow, never slow in an emergency, did his best to come to my relief.

"You need not trouble, my dear lady," he said, waving his right arm in what, I judge, was considered the chivalrous manner in his age. "You need not trouble at all—I am not particular. If you but have a nice quiet corner on the roof—"

"What's that? Corner on the roof?" echoed my wife and I in one voice; while into her eyes there came a slightly frightened expression, as though she suspected that she was in the presence of a dangerous lunatic.

"Oh, well then, if you haven't any roof space," continued our guest, obligingly, "maybe you have a removal external platform—"

Observing the blank air with which we were regarding him, he stopped abruptly short; and then, after a puzzled moment, attempted to explain:

"Oh, I had forgotten! You haven't advanced to that stage yet. In my own century, most families have space on the roof—it's considered the healthiest way of sleeping. But some people, being too far from the top floor, put detachable sleeping platforms out of their windows."

"Ellery, what under heaven is the man talking about?" demanded my wife, turning to me in a bewildered way. And in her eyes there was a reproving fire, as though she would add, "My dear man, you always do invite such queer guests to the house!"

"Pay no heed to him," I counselled. "He isn't quite used to our ways yet. . . . Shall I show the visitor to the spare room, Jane?"

"I guess you might as well!" she sighed, in a voice that seemed to imply that the whole affair was beyond her comprehension. "Yes, I'm sure the room is all ready."

A moment later, I had led the man from tomorrow to his bedroom. Having entered it in a rather suspicious, hesitant manner, he glanced all about him from wall to wall and from floor to ceiling, as if to take in every speck and detail; and a frown gathered to his pallid features and gradually deepened.

"How hot the place is!" he declared, although both windows had been opened wide and the temperature of the May night could not have been much over sixty. "These twentieth century houses are quaint to look at, but terrible to live in! You really sure I can't go up on the roof? . . . No? Then where is your cold air faucets? . . . Oh, if that isn't intolerable! Cold air faucets aren't invented yet! Then tell me where I can find the wall remover."

"Wall remover?"

He stared at me in growing dismay. His pale, twisted features showed an expression of unmistakable pain; he stroked his bulbous forehead anxiously with his thin hand. "Why, don't you ever know what a wall remover is? You mean to say that hasn't been invented, either? What an age! What an age! You simply don't seem to have any conveniences at all. I suppose you have nothing except the old-fashioned fixed walls, which

"In my own age," he remarked, in a hurt manner, "a guest is expected to make himself comfortable in any way that suits him best."

aren't meant to be taken down till the building is destroyed."

"Well, what else should we have?"

"What else, indeed?" The man from tomorrow peered at me with a scornful amusement. "What would you think of a man who couldn't take off his clothes till he died? So I suppose you imagine you have to swelter all summer behind closed walls, which keep out the sunlight and air? What a strange notion! All walls in our times are made in removable divisions, with spring attachments, so that they may be neatly folded up upon the pressure of an electric button. That is one way of keeping houses cool in summer."

"Sorry, Mr. Wormwood, but we're still mere savages," I replied drily, a little angered at his supercilious manner. "We have no folding walls. You will have to put up as well as you can with our antique accommodations."

"Oh, I'm not blaming you!" he was quick to declare. "It's not really your fault. You're merely the victim of the backwardness of the times."

"Maybe that's it. Well, good-night," said I, yawning; for I was exceedingly tired, and was not anxious to prolong the conversation.

But the man from tomorrow would not let me leave until after I had answered innumerable questions, and had explained how to switch on and off the electric lights—appliances which, since they were obsolete in his own age, he looked upon with something of the interest of an antiquarian. When I closed the door behind me, he was amusing himself by turning them on and off with the delight of a child in a new toy.

After a troubled night's sleep, I arose fairly early the following morning, browsed about in a closet to find an old suit, and at length, armed with a respectable-looking pair of gray trousers, a coat and various other articles of masculine apparel, knocked somewhat apprehensively at the room of the man from tomorrow.

I had to rap twice, and three times, before a drowsy voice called out, "Enter!" Then, pushing open the door, I was treated to a surprise. At the first glance, I noticed that the bed had not been slept upon—it had been dismantled as though by Vandals! All that I saw was the bare steel springs and frame; while ten feet beyond, near the open window, the mattress, sheets and blankets had all been piled together in a disordered mass, in the center of which the man from tomorrow was curled up like a caterpillar.

"Heaven preserve me!" I cried, hastily closing the door behind me. "What's come over you? If my wife were to see this, she'd go wild!"

"Why, what's wrong?" innocently inquired the man from tomorrow, as he arose in complete undress. "I was merely trying to make myself comfortable. It was too warm in the bed, so I moved to a cooler place."

"But look! Can't you see what you've done?" I stormed. "Is this the way to treat the bed coverings?"

But he was staring at me with such a lack of comprehension that my words stopped short in my throat.

"In my own age," he remarked, in a hurt manner, "a guest is expected to make himself comfortable in any way that suits him best."

Accepting this rebuke, I pointed to the mass of clothing which I held in my hand. "Here, Wormwood, better dress in these. After last night's experience, you can see how impractical it is to wear twenty-third century clothing in the twentieth century."

"Yes, I can see," he admitted, sadly, "that I must suffer the doom of all who are ahead of their times. I must be jeered at and laughed at. I must endure ridicule and abuse. I must become the butt of fools, and undergo the agonies of martyrdom. Ah, well! a man must sacrifice something when he undertakes to reform his ancestors."

"You can keep your twenty-third century costume as a curiosity," I continued, pointing to the discarded garment. "But if you're to live in the twentieth century, you must do as the twentieth century does."

"If I did as the twentieth century does, I wouldn't really be living at all," he rejoined, dolefully. "However, I can see that there is a certain practical logic to your remarks. If one were a dweller among the donkeys, I suppose, one wouldn't be respected unless one knew how to bray. Very well, then! I must compromise with my ideals, and look as commonplace as the citizens of this age. Bring on the clothes! I'll try as many of them as I can stand, but more than that I won't promise you!"

Now began a battle royal. Although the man from tomorrow seemed to have capitulated, he was far from having made a complete surrender. How I pleaded and argued with him! How I struggled before he could be induced to don a pair of trousers! How many well meant words I wasted! How many appeals passed over him in vain before he would consent to wear a shirt! And yet this represented the utmost limits of my conquest!—the fruits of half an hour of such nerve-racking work as I had never put in before a college class! Resolutely, despite all my efforts, he refused even to try on a pair of shoes or socks, being better content with the thin little sandals of the twenty-third century; he refused the use of underwear; he refused a tie and collar, declaring that he saw no conceivable use for them; he declined absolutely to put on a coat, maintaining that it would subserve neither the purposes of beauty nor of comfort. I cannot say that he was exactly what might be called "presentable" as he was finally arrayed, for my clothes were vastly too big for him and fitted him like bags, and—though I hesitated to admit it even to myself—it occurred to me that he had looked less unattractive in his native costume. However, most of the exposed parts of his skin had now been covered, and he might therefore appear in civilized society without shocking the delicate susceptibilities of the age.

"At last you look like a modern man!" I informed him, sighing with relief at his transformation. Whereupon he regarded himself with a wry expression, did a turn or two about the room in the tentative manner of a young lady trying on a new costume, and then remarked, gloomily, "Well, I suppose I'll get used to it in time. I suppose I'll have to get used to it. But it's a good thing my own people can't see me now. How Maranna and the rest of them would laugh! They'd suspect I had some disease and wanted to hide my skin. I might be arrested for indecent concealment."

Having thus expressed his views, the man from tomorrow drew up his lips into an expression of grim resignation, and soberly concluded, "I guess I'm ready for you now. All prepared to see the twentieth century by daylight. Come, shall we start?"

CHAPTER IX

Romance and Discovery

AS the man from tomorrow and I were coming down the stairs, we heard the sound of voices in excited disputation.

"No, Roscoe," I could make out the stubborn tones of a woman, "you can't get me to believe it. I've come here just to give you your chance to prove it all, it's such a nice little fairy story!"

"But, Alice, you just wait till you see him!" pleaded a masculine voice. "Just wait!" Professor Howard will bear me out! I'll swear to you—"

"No need for swearing!" I interrupted, as the man from tomorrow and I reached the bottom of the stairs, and I nodded to Dr. Horn and his fiancée, who were awaiting us in the sitting-room. "What is the argument all about?"

"Alice won't accept my word—about why I couldn't keep my appointment last night—though I ran over the first thing this morning to explain!" testified Dr. Horn, in a flustered manner. "Maybe you can convince her, Professor."

"Maybe I can," I concurred. "But first let me introduce our friend. Miss Whitcomb—Mr. Wormwood."

The man from tomorrow swung low with a flourish, like the courtier of a medieval king. One hand was placed significantly over his heart; the other was lifted wide in a gallant gesture, which brought a titter to the lips of Miss Whitcomb.

"It does me honor, my dear lady," said our guest, apparently not noticing the girl's amusement, "to make the acquaintance of such a delightful representative of her sex."

Thereupon he flung forth both hands, and took Miss Whitcomb's reluctant ones in his.

While I had no doubt that this was to be considered the courteous manner of address in the twenty-third century. I was a little alarmed at the effusiveness of the man from tomorrow. I was particularly alarmed when I saw with what admiring eyes he was staring at the young lady. Miss Whitcomb, with her tall well-built form, her clear complexion, blue eyes and finely modelled features, was far from an unattractive person, and there were many men who would not have been immune to her charms; yet never before had I seen any one show his feelings so soon or so openly and unreservedly.

"Miss Whitcomb," continued the man from tomorrow, with irrepressible fluency, "I have been more than a little bewildered at this curious century of yours. Many of your habits are so peculiar that I fear I shall never get quite used to them, and naturally I am feeling just a little homesick for my own age. But ladies like you will help me to forget. Yes, I might even say that, through my good fortune in meeting you, this generation is redeemed in my estimation."

Having made this speech, the man from tomorrow executed another of his chivalrous bows; while the rest of us gazed at him open-mouthed, not knowing whether to believe his exaggerated language serious or in jest.

"By the way, Miss Whitcomb," proceeded our guest, in a brisker, more business-like manner, "do you expect to be at home this evening? If so, and if you are doing nothing in particular, it will give me pleasure—"

It was now Dr. Horn's turn to speak. The scowl which darkened his features did not indicate that he enjoyed the turn that matters had taken. "Miss Whitcomb is engaged this evening!" he snapped, cutting short the man from tomorrow. "She and I have an important appointment. Come, Alice, shall we be going?"

But Wormwood, unperturbed, continued suavely, "Dr. Horn, I put my question to the young lady, and so, of course, I shall expect my answer from no one else. I do not know how such things are managed in this century, but in my own times a full-grown woman is usually considered competent to decide her own affairs."

From the manner in which Dr. Horn glowered at our visitor, I feared that it would not have taken much to bring them to blows.

But Miss Whitcomb, although it seemed to me that she shrank from her new acquaintance, answered in a pleasant enough voice, "I thank you very much, Mr. Wormwood. It is very good of you. But I am engaged for this evening."

"Well, I suppose that can't be helped," conceded the man from tomorrow. "However, there are other evenings coming. From present indications, my stay among you will be a prolonged one. Perhaps we shall still see much of one another."

"Perhaps," she replied, without enthusiasm.

"Come, let's be going!" Dr. Horn brusquely repeated. . . . Good-bye, Professor. See you on the Campus."

"Good-bye, Mr. Wormwood," said Miss Whitcomb, in low, restrained tones.

"Good-bye, my dear lady," returned Wormwood, bowing once more. "Our acquaintance thus far, I regret, has been unpleasantly short. But then, you remember the words of the poet:

"'A moment's meeting in an April mood
Is worth ten years of Arctic solitude.'"

"No, I'm afraid I don't remember," she confessed.

"Really?" The man from tomorrow looked surprised. "Oh, but of course, I should have recalled! They were written by Jensen-Thayer, who wasn't born till 2050! Too bad you've never read him! He was a great poet!"

"Come! We've got to be going!" reiterated Dr. Horn, in more surly tones than ever. And, taking Miss Whitcomb's arm, he retreated without so much as a backward glance at the man from tomorrow.

Over the breakfast table—at which our guest refused to eat more than an orange and a plate of prunes—I undertook to refer tactfully to the liberties he had taken with Miss Whitcomb.

"I know nothing about the customs of your age," I said, "but in our age that sort of thing isn't done. No, it simply isn't done. In the first place, Miss Whitcomb is not at liberty to make dates with young men. She is engaged to become another man's wife. Her wedding to Dr. Horn has been announced—"

"But what has that to do with it?" interrupted the man from tomorrow, with a puzzled air. "I never can make out the ways of this century—you have such singular ideas! Now I wasn't proposing to the girl. For that matter, though, I don't see why I shouldn't, if she cares enough for me. I was merely suggesting a bit of friendly intercourse, and I don't see any reason why Dr. Horn should object. Just because she's engaged to him, should she deny herself the charms of all other masculine society?"

"But Miss Whitcomb," I returned, slightly irritated, "is a fine, high-minded young lady, and wouldn't want any other masculine society."

The eyes of the man from tomorrow opened wide with amazement. His thin lips made a gaping oval of surprise. "Oh, so that's it!" he ejaculated. "Well, I do remember reading some bad reports of my forefathers! So the masculine society of this age is so unfit—"

"Nothing of the kind!" I denied, wondering where he had gotten such an idea.

But, disregarding my words, he went on to explain, "Well, fortunately, I'm not a man of this age. So you needn't fear. My intentions are honorable. No young lady has cause for alarm—"

"I wasn't questioning that," I assured him. "Just the same, Wormwood, if you want to get along in the twentieth century, you'll have to change your tactics. Even if Miss Whitcomb wasn't engaged, do you think she'd have made an appointment with you on such short acquaintance?"

"Why not?" he demanded. "How could we make our short acquaintance longer without arranging to meet again?"

I opened my mouth to reply to this ridiculous question; but, not being able to think of a satisfactory answer, I decided that it was unworthy of attention.

Several seconds passed in silence while I bent over my soft-boiled eggs and my companion watched me

quizzically. Finally, resolving upon a different line of attack, I inquired, "Even from your own point of view, Wormwood, I shouldn't think you'd want to become too familiar with the girls of this century. Didn't you say something about being engaged to a Miss Maranna?"

"Yes, of course! But how far away Maranna is!" sighed the man from tomorrow, with a wistful expression. "I don't think I'd be disloyal to her—not in our own century. But, surely, it would be unreasonable of her to expect me to remain in perpetual bachelorhood three hundred years before she was born. No, Maranna would have more understanding than that. She always was of a logical disposition, being the daughter of a mathematician and a female judge by a eugenic union."

The conversation having taken a sentimental turn, my guest lapsed into a melancholy mood; and his eyes, burning with a soft, sad light, seemed to be fixed on things far away and still unborn.

A few minutes later, upon rising from the breakfast table, I consulted my watch and found that it was almost time to leave for the Campus. How to provide my visitor with something to occupy him for the rest of the day was now a problem; but I solved the difficulty—so I thought—by leading him into the library, where more than two thousand choice volumes were stacked almost to the ceiling.

"No doubt you will be able to entertain yourself for a few hours here," I suggested. "I shall see you sometime this afternoon. Meanwhile, if you need anything, just call for Mrs. Howard."

"Oh, I'm sure I'll not need anything," he assured me. "My requirements, as you have found, are of the simplest." And then, with manifest curiosity, he began devoting himself to the book-cases.

"Strange bindings, these!" he remarked, taking out a typical cloth-bound tome. "Interesting to see, but how flimsy! Probably this was made before binding in flexible tinalfer came into vogue. That is to say, a tin, aluminum and iron alloy, of exceeding lightness, and guaranteed to be indestructible. Well, well, well! I suppose the old bindings did well enough in their way. Now let's see, what authors have you? I suppose you have editions of Rubinbower, Bellovitz, and De la Chaine?"

"Rubinbower, Bellovitz, and De la Chaine?" I repeated, in bewilderment.

"Oh, I'm always forgetting!" was the annoyed response. "It didn't occur to me—they haven't been born yet. Well, let's see what books you do have. Though it seems hard to imagine any library without the epics of Rubinbower or the satires of De la Chaine!"

A minute passed while Wormwood scrutinized the contents of my case with a disapproving air.

"Strange!" he finally announced. "I don't recollect any of these names! The study of literature used to be one of my hobbies, too! . . . Theodore Dreiser! James Branch Cabell! Anatole France! Bernard Shaw! Who were they? You know, I can't place any of them. To come to think of it, of course, that's not surprising—the twentieth century was such a decadent period in literature. Its writers were such second-raters! No one reads them much nowadays—that is to say, in the twenty-third century—unless he's preparing some erudite work on 'Literature Decline, Its Causes and Effects,' or 'Fads and Foibles in Literature, with Special Reference to the Poetasters of the Neurotic Age.'"

"From the way you speak," I replied indignantly, "I suppose you've read a good deal of twentieth century literature?"

"Why, no, no—can't say that I have," Wormwood admitted, haltingly. "My taste has always inclined toward the classics."

"Then read before you criticize!" I advised, supplying him with copies of Rudyard Kipling, H. G. Wells, Romain Rolland, and other leading modern authors. And with that, and a few words of final advice, I bade him a hasty farewell.

As I left the room, he was drawing a volume from the case with an expression of delighted recognition. "Ah! John Milton! And Shakespeare, too! I'm glad to see copies of our great predecessors. Strange, how little your age seems to have profited by their example!"

During the twenty minutes' journey to the Campus, my mind was occupied with matters more weighty by far than Wormwood's opinions of contemporary literature. What to do with him was the problem that was troubling me, for I had neither the inclination nor the ability to lodge such a guest indefinitely at my home. But where else was he to go? Surely, even were he well supplied with money—and it was all too evident that he had not a penny—he would be less capable than a child of caring for himself in this century; while, on the other hand, his paralyzing rays would make him a public menace. Again, he was doubtless the possessor of much knowledge that our age could not acquire through normal means for generations yet, and the loss to science would be inestimable were he to keep this precious information to himself; hence it seemed to me that I had no more the right, than I had the desire, to detain him long at my house, or to withhold from the world the incredible facts of his origin. All in all, it appeared to me, the best course would be to take some of my colleagues into my confidence, to invite them to my home to interview the man from tomorrow, and to seek their advice as to our visitor's future.

In order not to take my associates too much by surprise, I decided not to begin by explaining what had occurred. I merely informed them, in a purposely mysterious manner, that an event of the first scientific importance had occurred, and that there would be a meeting to discuss it at my house that evening; and I begged them to disregard all other engagements in order to be present. Partly because of my assurance that phenomenal revelations were in store, and partly because of the pulsating earnestness which, I am sure, I could not wholly conceal, I had little difficulty in prevailing upon my fellow faculty members; and it was not long before I was able to look forward to seeing six or eight distinguished scientists at my home that evening.

After leaving the University in the afternoon, I turned my footsteps toward the lodgings of Mr. Cloud. When I had last seen him, he had been in a state of paralysis; and, despite the assurance of the man from tomorrow that the inventor would be well again within twenty-four hours, it occurred to me that he might possibly be in need of assistance. I was therefore relieved to find him almost recovered. It is true that, when I arrived, he had difficulty in opening the door to let me in; that his muscles still worked stiffly and the numbness had not quite left his limbs. But the effect of the paralysis was passing, and it should not be long, he thought, before he was his normal self again.

"I'm glad you came, Professor," said he, his face brightening with a welcoming smile as I entered. "It's been pretty lonesome lying here all by myself. Was any man ever so unfortunate before, I wonder? Here our visitor from the twenty-third century not only ruins the work of years by his arrival, but has the poor manners to paralyze the author of his being!"

"Very naturally, he feels a grudge against you for bringing him into this century," I declared, as I took a seat on the threadbare couch. "But don't worry, Mr. Cloud, you're not the only victim." And, as briefly as possible, I described my own adventures with the man from tomorrow.

The inventor listened to my recital with an interested air, and then remarked, "The question now is this, Professor: how are we to get our visitor back to his rightful century? Personally, I don't see any way. The apparatus that got him here is shattered, and I haven't any funds to rebuild it—even if that would be of any avail. I'm afraid he's going to prove an infernal nuisance to our century. I dread to think how many people he will paralyze."

"I've been considering all that, Mr. Cloud," I admitted, reflectively. "And that brings us back to your invention. If we could make some interested person see what a work of genius it is, maybe we could procure the funds to build you a new laboratory. I'll tell you what—" Here I hesitated for a moment, since a fresh idea had come to me. "I'll tell you what, Mr. Cloud. Suppose you get ready and come with me now. There's going to be a meeting of scientists at my home this evening. That should give you your opportunity. You'll explain about your Dimension Machine, and I'll do my best to substantiate your claims. If my colleagues become sufficiently interested, no doubt something will be done for you. What do you say?"

"Good!" ejaculated Cloud, taking my hand heartily. "It's mighty decent of you, Professor!"

But, almost instantly, the light died from his face. "There's just one objection," he mumbled. "Would I—would I have to meet Mr. Wormwood again?"

"I'm afraid that would be necessary."

For a moment Cloud was silent. "You know, I hate to come within range of those paralyzing rays," he assured me, with the air of a martyr. "But I suppose I must take the chance. I'll try to remember it's all in the interests of science. I'll be ready in just a second, Professor."

Although the inventor still walked a little feebly and stiffly, we found that the effect of the paralysis had vanished once he attempted to use his limbs actively. Within a few minutes, we were on the way to my home, while my mind was occupied with surmises and misgivings as to the behavior of the man from tomorrow during my absence.

CHAPTER X

Adventure and Conflict

WHEN Cloud and I were within a block or two of my home, our attention was attracted by the sounds of loud disputation, in which the shouts and yells of excited humans were mingled with the snarls and howling of a dog. At one of the street corners, a crowd of boys and men had gathered, jeering and clamoring by fits and starts; while in their midst, in the intervals between the hoots and catcalls, the voices of two embattled men could be heard.

At first my companion and I had no idea what the fight was all about, nor could we make out who the combatants were. "Doubtless it's only some street ruffians," I remarked, and would have gone quietly home and taken no further notice of the affair—had not Cloud insisted on drawing me near the scene of the disturbance.

And it was not a minute before I became interested in ways I had scarcely expected.

"You insignificant little fly-speck!" we heard the voice of some unseen contestant. "Go home to your mother, and leave real men alone! What do you mean by breaking into my affairs? Is it my dog, or yours? Say just another word, and I'll wipe the sidewalk with you!"

"Say just another word, and I'll paralyze you!" rang forth the reply, in tones that were startlingly familiar. "You despicable puppy! The muzzle should have been on you, and not on the dog!"

Hoots and yells of glee greeted these words, accompanied by a renewed uproar of barking.

Excitedly Cloud and I pushed forward. "Stop! Stop!" I cried, forgetting my professional dignity in the agitation of the moment, while in furious haste I broke through the crowd. "Stop! Just one minute!"

There, in the center of the mob, were two well known figures! One of them was my neighbor, Philip Preston, the son of Judge Preston; the other was the man from tomorrow! Both of them were wild-eyed with rage; both of them, with flushed faces, dilated nostrils, and clenched and quivering fists, seemed ready to commit murder. Certainly, had I not arrived in the nick of time, either the man from tomorrow would have been badly mauled, or else Preston would have been paralyzed!

"If you think it's your dog—" the judge's son was saying, as I strode into the thick of the combat, and, interposing myself between the two antagonists, halted the hostilities and demanded what was the matter.

Both of the opponents, though appearing to resent my intrusion, attempted to answer at once. But it was the man from tomorrow who, being quicker and more fluent of speech, managed to make himself heard.

"What was the matter?" he shrilled, to the accompaniment of an undertone of derisive laughter from the mob. "This two-legged brute, who goes by the name of a man, had the cruelty to clamp down the jaws of his dog with a leather strap, which he calls a muzzle! I saw the poor animal nosing against the trees and walls, trying his pitiful best to remove the encumbrance—and so what could I do but act like a man and take it off for him?"

"Yes, but it was my dog! And my muzzle, too!" shrieked Preston, while, with brandished fists, he edged forward, as though, despite my interference, he would force his way to his foe and pummel him. "What business is it of yours, I'd like to know? You broke the muzzle when I asked for it, and then tried to keep me from getting the animal back!"

"You weren't fit to get it back!" cried the man from tomorrow, while the crowd still shrieked and gibbered with glee. "Who are you to command the immortal soul of a dumb beast? Any man of honor would have done as I did!"

And once more the throng howled and roared.

"Listen here, Wormwood," said I, managing for the first time to put in a word of explanation, "I don't think you quite understand. This gentleman here—Mr. Preston—isn't cruel. He's merely obeying a city ordinance requiring dogs to be muzzled. He had to do as he did—according to the law."

"According to the law!" echoed Wormwood, in bewilderment. "What sort of law would that be? No, no, I won't believe it! No law could be so cruel! That the poor, dumb animals, who haven't even a word in the making of the laws, should be treated so heartlessly—incredible! Why, it's punishment without representation!"

"We don't consider it punishment," I insisted, although I could see how incredulously the man from tomorrow was smiling. And then, perceiving that there was nothing to be gained from further argumentation, I turned to Preston and promised, I'll make up to you for the broken muzzle"; and to Wormwood I added, "Better come along with me now. I want to speak to you."

Flinging a final bolt at his adversary, "Lucky for you you didn't get paralyzed", the man from tomorrow slouched into place behind Cloud and myself, and, heedless of the grins and mockery of the mob, began calmly

to inquire where I had been and why I had remained away so long.

"I've had some interesting times since you left," he confided. "Of course, I couldn't remain very long in your library, reading those musty antique books, especially since so few of the really good writers were to be found there. And so I decided to go out and inspect the twentieth century in my own way. Unluckily, I didn't know where to go, and most of the time I got lost in the slums. There was one street of tenements that interested me particularly. I asked some one its name, and had a good long laugh to myself, it was so inappropriate."

"What was it called?" I inquired, with visions of Mulberry Street.

"Park Avenue."

"Park Avenue! You don't mean to say—"

But the man from tomorrow, not seeming to hear me, continued garrulously, "By the glorious stars, I don't see how any one can bear to live in such a place! The buildings were all eight or ten stories high, and there wasn't a bit of greenery. The motor cars on the streets were thick as packs of wolves, and the air was so badly poisoned I got a headache. Nowhere was there a sign of trace of beauty, or of an open space, or even of a restful spot for the eyes. It was all delightful enough from the historical point of view, but, by the Everlasting, how I do pity those poor souls that have to live there!"

"Poor souls!" I echoed. "Why, they're our richest citizens!"

The man from tomorrow stared at me in the gaping, unbelieving manner that had come to be almost habitual with him.

"Now why don't you tell me something reasonable?" he asked. "What motive could your richest citizens have for living in the slums? What conceivable motive? Unless, of course"—here the speaker smiled as if sudden comprehension had come to him—"unless, of course, they wish to do penance for the sin of possessing more than they need."

"Not at all!" I denied. "You know nothing whatever of the matter! They are so far from doing penance that they are the envy of millions!"

The man from tomorrow looked more bewildered than ever; but once more he struggled to adjust his intellect to the demands of this staggering problem.

"Then the only explanation I can see," he ruminated, "is that the dwellers there, while rich in pocket, are so poor at heart that they do not miss the wide spaces, the open skies, the green trees, the grasses and the waters."

By this time we had reached my house; and, after entering and being greeted by my wife, we made ourselves comfortable in the sitting-room.

"Don't you have any big buildings in your own time?" asked Cloud, by way of continuing the conversation.

"Unfortunately, we do," Wormwood acknowledged, sadly. "The increase in population has made that evil necessary. But our laws provide that for every square foot which is built upon, two square feet must be reserved for streets, gardens and recreation grounds. There are some reformers who believe the ratio should be three to one, or even four to one. While such ideas are generally considered impractical, no self-respecting community would think of returning to the cramped conditions of the Anthill Age."

"The Anthill Age?" Cloud demanded.

"Oh, that's another name for the Neurotic Age."

A moment passed in silence; then, hoping to give a different turn to the conversation, I inquired, "Well, Wormwood, was Park Avenue the only street you inspected?"

"By no means! I discovered others that looked even more poverty-ridden. I will admit that this was highly venturesome of me, for I had to cross at many intersections, and every time I did so, I had to screw up my courage in the manner of a swimmer diving into a shark-infested sea. Of course, I never knew whether or not I was to arrive on the other side. But by the grace of good fortune and much agile dodging, I escaped all those terrific four-wheeled engines that came thundering toward me like bloodthirsty goblins; and thus, at the risk of my life, I did manage to see something of this century. I was particularly interested in your shop windows, which had such curious displays that they reminded me of museums. For example, there were windows full of little brown finger-shaped objects; and upon going into one of the shops and asking the clerk what they were for, he looked at me as if he thought I were out of my mind, and said, 'For smoking, of course!' That made me laugh outright, for the idea seemed simply too delicious for words. Just the same, he was not joking; only a minute afterwards, I saw a man put a light to one of those silly, brown affairs and stick it into his mouth with such a serious air, that I had to laugh again."

The man from tomorrow paused long enough to smile whimsically; then lightly continued:

"After that, I saw lots of other amusing things. First there was a store with the sign, 'Finest Drugs'; and upon looking into the window, what did I see but a pile of books! Then there was another store with a whole array of nauseating-looking articles—all green and pink and red and yellow and other disgusting colors—and I saw a sign 'Choice Confectionary,' suggesting that these unnatural things were meant to eat! After that, I was ready to find stores containing blue potatoes or purple loaves of bread, and was rather surprised not to come across any. But what I did see next was amazing enough—a shop with a lot of pretty little trinkets, such as we give our children to play with—pearls, rubies, sapphires, diamonds and the like! I was astonished to discover that they were being sold for real money! 'Well, well, well, how the world has changed!' I thought. And I was filled with pity for the men of the twentieth century, who didn't know any better than to waste their time on baubles.

"So thinking, I passed on into a big, broad street, very twisted and irregular, which I judged to be one of the central thoroughfares of the town. There were enormous signs strung everywhere high up on the buildings; and, naturally, I looked at these with great interest, for I supposed that they would embody uplifting thoughts from the great poets and philosophers, such as one finds above the cities of the twenty-third century. But alas! what a disappointment! Could the authors of the twentieth century—decadent as they were—be responsible for such sentiments? I asked myself. The more I gazed, the more perplexed I became; for I did not see anything that made sense. 'Sixty-six varieties—sold everywhere,' I remember reading; and 'Buy Squirmley's Peppered Chewing Gum'—by the way, what is 'chewing gum'? Then there was something about 'Rough-Edge Tires'—another reference which, somehow, I don't quite catch; and after that I read about a woman named Dolly Dolores, who was to appear in a play called 'The Devil of Deep Gulch.' By this time I decided that I had seen enough, and so I started back. I had kept careful track of the way, and had not much trouble about returning—although once I was nearly run down by one of those man-eating cars. The driver never knew how near he came to being paralyzed! But nothing else of interest happened till I got near your house, when I saw that brute of a man abusing the dog."

Having completed this recitation, the man from tomorrow yawned, and wearily announced, "Heavens, but I am tired! This tour of the twentieth century has been about all I have been able to stand!"

And then, without so much as asking permission, he stretched himself out at full length on my wife's best sofa, and was soon contentedly snoring.

CHAPTER XI

The Examiners Assemble

OF the scientists whom I had invited to my home that evening, all except one had arrived by the appointed hour. Truly, they made a notable gathering!—there was Professor Milton Rushmore, the well known anthropologist; there was Professor Charles Warrington, my colleague in the Physics Department; there was Professor Hilbert Carroway, renowned for his text-books on physiology; there was Dr. Virgil Stoner, a psychologist whose reputation was nation-wide; there was Professor Rhys Thornwell, the chemist; and there were one or two others of equal distinction. To my regret, Dr. Horn was not to be present, since he could not be induced to break his appointment with Miss Whitcomb; and this was most unfortunate, and was greatly to enhance the difficulties of my task.

When finally my visitors had all convened in the library and sat smoking and chatting together, I was conscious of an atmosphere of suspense and unspoken questioning which secretly troubled me, for as yet none of my colleagues had any suspicion of the reason for our meeting, and I was not sure how best to make the revelation. I solved the difficulty, however, by calling in Mr. Cloud, who was waiting in an adjoining room in company with the man from tomorrow; and, having introduced the inventor as a still unrecognized scientific genius, I bade him tell his story of the Dimension Machine. This he did with fluency and gusto, beginning with his early struggles, dwelling at length upon his years of investigation and adversity, and ending with an account of the success of the Dimension Machine and with the views it had provided of the remote past and future. Regardless of the stares of perplexity and doubt on the faces of his auditors, Cloud had boldly described how scraps and débris from past ages had been deposited in the Dimension Machine, and was preparing to tell of the arrival of our visitor from the twenty-third century—when all at once the door was flung open and the man from tomorrow stood framed in the entrance.

"I beg pardon," he startled us all by saying, as he nodded in my direction. "Your radio-vizor is ringing!"

"Radio-vizor!" I gasped; and then instantly I understood—the telephone was sounding in the hall!

I excused myself, and dashed to the instrument. "Hello! . . . No! No! Wrong number!" one might have heard me snap, followed by a "Damn it" under my breath. Then, returning to the library, I was further irritated to find the man from tomorrow in conversation with my guests, who were regarding him with smiles and twinkles of amusement.

"My name is John Wormwood," he was saying. "What is your name? Professor Rushmore? I didn't catch the first name. Oh, Milton Rushmore. This is a great honor, Milton, I assure you. I hope we shall see much more of each other . . ."

Breaking in upon the man from tomorrow, I demanded, "What's the matter, Wormwood? Don't you know any better than to call Professor, Milton?"

"Why not?" inquired Wormwood, with a blank expression. "Didn't he say that was his name? In my own century—"

The storm of laughter, that burst upon us, cut short these words; and it was after several minutes had passed, that some one had a chance to ask, "What was it that you were saying, Mr. Wormwood, about a radio something—"

"A radio-visor? It's an improvement on an old-fashioned talking instrument—a tele—tele—no, not teleplane. I just can't recollect the term. In my excitement just now, I had forgotten that radio-vizors weren't invented until after the Neurotic Age."

At these words, renewed merriment convulsed my visitors. When the outburst had subsided, I saw that they were staring at Wormwood in that curiously indulgent manner which we reserve for children, and for those who are not quite right in the head.

"Your jests sound exceedingly clever, sir," declared Professor Rushmore, patronizingly, "but I must admit that I don't exactly get them."

"That's only to be expected, since I was quite serious," declared Wormwood, simply.

The fresh laughter that greeted these words was such as few serious men could have hoped to evoke.

It was only too apparent that matters were going from bad to worse. If the conversation continued in this vein, would not my colleagues think that I had summoned them to a vaudeville show instead of a serious scientific discussion? And so I found an immediate explanation necessary. "Do not pay any heed to Mr. Wormwood," I pleaded. "What he says is all sensible enough, but before you listen you must understand more about him. And that is what I have called you here tonight to consider. The facts, I believe, are the most extraordinary in the history of science. Had they not been demonstrated to me beyond all question, I would not insult your intelligence by presenting an account of them. So prepare yourselves for a revelation. Prepare for an epoch-making annoucement. Mr. Wormwood is not a man of your own age. He owes his presence here to Mr. Cloud's Dimension Machine. He was born in the twenty-third century."

I came to an emphatic halt, and the silence that fell upon us was sepulchral. All eyes were fastened upon me with a fixed, inquiring scrutiny; but the faces of the listeners, it seemed to me, were drawn up into hard, hostile lines, as though they had no sympathy with what I had been saying,—as though they were neither ready nor willing to accept it.

But after a moment, when the silence was becoming almost too heavy to bear, aid came to me from an unexpected quarter.

"You're all a lot of hard-baked doubters, aren't you?" suddenly demanded the man from tomorrow. "You don't believe one word, I suppose? You can't imagine that I came from another century?"

There was a momentary pause of embarrassment; then the booming voice of Dr. Virgil Stoner was heard.

"Well now, Mr. Wormwood, isn't that a good deal to imagine? I pride myself we're not exactly without imagination, any of us; but, at the same time, we're not gullible peasants. When we hear such a—er—remarkable story, we require proof."

"Proof?" flung back the man from tomorrow, disdainfully. "If it's proof that you're seeking, haven't you got it already? Why, can't you take just one glance at me, and decide for yourself? Do I look like one of you? Can't you see the marks of a superior century written all over me?"

And the man from tomorrow strutted back and forth like a cock displaying himself before the hens.

Amused smiles played once more upon several faces; but Dr. Stoner was obdurate.

"Well, I guess I'm blind," he admitted. "I can't see the marks of any superiority at all."

He paused, gravely wrinkled up his brow, and continued, "I trust that you won't mind, Mr. Wormwood, if I talk to you a little frankly. Have you ever visited a psychiatrist? I should say that a psycho-analyst would be able to help you. Possibly some childhood repression, working through the channels of the subconscious, has produced this delusion of a future birth—"

"Delusion?" cried the man from tomorrow, quick as always to anger. "I tell you the only delusion is your own! Your mind is so stuffed and padded with out-of-date notions, that when you see the glimmer of a new idea you call it a delusion! If a bat were made to see the sunlight, no doubt he would call that a delusion too!"

Filled with a perfect frenzy of indignation, the man from tomorrow paced the room with clenched fists; and the angry fires that darted from his eyes did not bode well for Dr. Stoner.

In one or two faces there was still an amused glitter; but most of my visitors were looking grave and even a little anxious, as though Wormwood were not merely a madman, but a dangerous madman.

It was Professor Thornwell who broke the embarrassing silence that followed. "Mr. Wormwood, you still haven't offered us any definite proof. Surely, it's not unreasonable to ask for some convincing evidence."

"There's no such thing as convincing evidence—for those that don't want to be convinced!" proclaimed the man from tomorrow.

With these words, he did another whirl about the room; then, taking counsel with himself, he decided, "Very well! I'll give you a chance! Just wait here a minute, and we'll see! We'll see!"

Before I had any idea what he was about, he had gone darting out of the room.

"Here! Where are you going?" I called out, with some vague notion of rushing after him. But he did not answer; and, thinking it best to leave him to his own devices, I sank back into my seat with a sigh, and awaited developments.

"A curious individual!" remarked Dr. Stoner, thoughtfully. "A most curious individual! How I should like to psycho-analyze him! One thing is apparent from his remark about his superiority—which is that he has an inferiority-complex. Aside from that, I can't be certain just what the trouble is. Perhaps his case is one of incipient, dementia praecox; and then again it may turn out to be the manic-depressive type. I should say that the hysterical symptoms indicate a form of psychosis in which——"

Unfortunately for Dr. Stoner, the man from tomorrow returned at this point; and so the psychologist was never to complete his diagnosis.

In Wormwood's hands was an object which I recognized only too well—the garment he had worn upon his arrival from his own century.

"See! Look at this closely!" he requested, thrusting the article into Professor Thornwell's hands. "Tell me whether anything like this was produced in the Neurotic Age!"

Like a group of school girls examining a new dress, all had arisen in fluttering excitement, and, with staccato exclamations, were crowding around Professor Thornwell.

"Why, I—I don't know that I have seen anything just like it," gasped the chemist. "I—I don't know what it's made of."

"You will observe that it is not cloth," pointed out the man from tomorrow. "Note carefully—there are no threads."

"No, there are no threads. It is not cloth," conceded Thornwell, struggling with his surprise. "I'll be blest if I've ever seen anything to match it!"

"How light it is!" some one else was commenting. "And how smooth and flexible! How strangely it shimmers! It's like silk to the touch, and yet it isn't silk."

"No, it certainly isn't," agreed the man from tomorrow. "It's a product of synthetic chemistry—made up of silicon, aluminum, and one or two other ingredients. The formula wasn't discovered till 2190. Ever since that time, it's been the backbone of the garment industry. It's cheaper than cotton, and it never wears out."

"By heaven!" ejaculated Thornwell. "I wonder if you'd let me take it with me. I'd like to analyze it—examine it in the laboratory."

"Go ahead!" Wormwood acquiesced, with a shrug. "But don't imagine that you people, at this early date, have the equipment to duplicate it."

Pleased that Wormwood had thought of so effective a method of substantiating my story, I lifted my voice with perhaps just a faint note of triumph.

"Well now, my friends, I wonder whether you're convinced? Do you agree that our visitor was not born in our own age?"

But not yet had the truth prevailed! One again that unconquerable sceptic, Dr. Stoner, insisted on objecting!

"By no means, Howard! Why should I agree?" he demanded. "Even a child wouldn't be deceived by such arguments! Just because you show me a new kind of cloth, does that prove that its maker is not a man of our own century! Suppose it's a new invention, which hasn't been put on the market yet? All in all, that's a far more likely theory, it seems to me. I still cling to my original contention. Mr. Wormwood should seek the services of some good psychiatrist——"

"Oh, should I?" caught up the man from tomorrow, whose eyes were darting irate lightnings at Dr. Stoner. "Because your own mind is impenetrable, I should have my mind examined? Well, let that be! So you still want more proof? What would you say if I were to give it to you?"

There was such force and determination in these words, and the speaker came to such an emphatic halt, that for the moment Stoner seemed at a loss for a reply.

"So you still want more proof?" repeated the man from tomorrow, in slower, more significant tones. "If you ask it, I promise you that you shall not ask in vain!"

"Of course I ask it!" asserted Dr. Stoner. "Why not——"

Before the psychologist could complete his sentence, Wormwood had reached into his trouser pocket and drawn forth the little pistol-shaped contrivance. There came the ominous droning sound that I had already heard twice before, and the flash of green light—and Stoner groaned, staggered, and fell. . . .

Several minutes later, after the commotion had begun to subside and the paralyzed psychologist had been lifted to the couch, one might have heard the clear, unimpassioned tones of the man from tomorrow:

"Sorry, my friend. I was sorry to have to do that. But don't worry—you will be all right again within twenty-four hours. Surely, you will not mind the momentary inconvenience—it is all in the interest of science. Perhaps now you have the proof you were looking for."

Dr. Stoner muttered beneath his breath, but made no audible reply.

"Maybe there are some of you who are still looking for proof," continued Wormwood, blandly. "Maybe some of you hold that the paralyzing rays also are a twentieth century invention, which has still to be put on the market. If, therefore, you be seeking a still more convincing demonstration——"

But apparently no further demonstration was to be necessary. My colleagues one and all cast apprehensive

glances in the direction of the man from tomorrow, and announced themselves fully persuaded. I observed that none of them demanded a more thorough acquaintanceship with the rays, and that their attitude toward our visitor had grown much more polite, not to say respectful. In fact, several of them were edging toward the door, and one or two went so far as to reach for their hats, when I, in the most reassuring tones I could command, sought to pacify them:

"Be seated, gentlemen! You are none of you in any danger. Mr. Wormwood will not repeat his little performance—that I guarantee."

"No, gentlemen," confirmed Wormwood. "There is no need to repeat the performance—since you are all convinced."

Reluctantly, and with tremors of hesitation, my visitors returned to their seats; and while Stoner, after momentarily regaining consciousness, lapsed back into slumber, the rest of us launched into a questionnaire regarding the twenty-third century.

CHAPTER XII

The Inquisition Continues

SEATED around the room in a grave-eyed group, my visitors peered at the man from tomorrow as though he were an animal from some other world. Cigars and cigarettes once more went the rounds, and there was an undercurrent of whispered conversation; but the center of attention was Wormwood, who was kept busy answering queries.

"What year were you born in?" inquired Professor Warrington, by way of opening the attack; while he and several of his colleagues drew forth note-books and pencils.

"In the second year of the Decade of the Great Epic," stated the man from tomorrow.

We merely stared at him, as though he were speaking in some unknown tongue. But, seeing how blank every one looked, he went on to explain:

"Pardon me! I had forgotten what century it was! No doubt you haven't yet adopted the practice of giving each decade a name, after some notable work which it has bequeathed to the world. My birth decade, you see, took its name from the immortal poem of Geoffrey La Platte, who was then at the superb height of his powers. Expressed in your prosaic speech, my birth may be said to have occurred about the year 2195."

Rapidly the pencils of the examiners made their way across the paper, while Professor Carroway flung the next question:

"What is your age, sir?"

"My age?" The man from tomorrow looked surprised. "Why, haven't you guessed it? I have reached the Epoch of Ascendance."

"The Epoch of Ascendance?"

The man from tomorrow looked more surprised than ever. "I see that you don't even know what that means. Well, then, let me explain. We count age by important periods or epochs, not by years. First there is the Epoch of Infancy; then of Childhood; then of Adolescence; then of Ascendance, which in the case of most men of intellect lasts as long as they live, no matter how long that may be; though, in the case of a few unfortunates, it gives place to a fifth Epoch, the Epoch of Decadence. Heaven spare me from ever falling into that doom!"

Once more the pencils were racing across the page; and this time it was Professor Rushmore who continued the questionnaire:

"What is your lineage, sir? Your parents? Your family tree? Your ancestors?"

"My lineage is of the best," proclaimed the man from tomorrow, tapping his thin chest proudly. "I am born of a eugenic union. My father was rated perfect in ninety-eight points out of a hundred in the intelligence examinations before the National Academy. My mother received an equal rating for imaginative range and emotional depth. And so, you see, I had an excellent all-around start in life."

"I'm afraid I don't see," persisted Professor Rushmore. "Who were your father and mother? What did they do for a living? What sort of people did they spring from?"

"They sprang from the best, of course. Their parents, too, were eugenically selected. As for their living, they got that in the same way as everyone else—from the State. My father was a teacher of rhetoric in one of the Regional Universities of Arts and Letters. It was from him that I inherited my love of literature. My mother was a concert musician, who gave public performances on the peraltimo."

"The what?" we all gasped.

"The peraltimo! You mean to say you haven't heard of that, either? Now really? That makes it difficult for me. There are so many things you've never heard of. The peraltimo is the most popular instrument of our times. It produces all manner of harmonious sounds by the manipulation of the radio waves. It is like a whole symphony orchestra, yet only one person controls it. Well, well, well! so the peraltimo is unknown to you! That certainly is news!"

Into the eyes of the man from tomorrow, as he uttered these words, there crept a faintly contemptuous gleam, as though he were saying to himself, "Thank heaven! I was born in an enlightened era!"

"All that is very interesting, Mr. Wormwood, but aren't we getting away from our subject?" demanded Professor Rushmore, whose scowling face proclaimed him still on the trail of a single idea. "We were talking about your lineage. Now who made up your line of descent before your father and mother——"

"Before my father and mother?" shouted the witness. "Didn't I tell you my grandparents also had eugenic qualifications? Otherwise, do you suppose I could be what I am today?"

The man from tomorrow paused, and, puffing out his chest pompously, resumed, "Beyond the third generation, I've never really troubled very much to inquire. Why should I? Naturally, since the course of evolution is onward and upward, my remote forebears must have been inferior to me!"

Peering at the frail, undersized figure of the man from tomorrow, with his bulging forehead and irregularly placed nose and chin, we could not help smiling a bit. My lips had already parted to utter something biting and sarcastic, when we were interrupted by the mumblings of Dr. Stoner, who had been lying quietly on the couch. Opening his eyes, he muttered something inaudible, stared at us pathetically, and then passed again into unconsciousness.

"Poor fellow!" murmured Cloud. "It's hit him pretty hard! He must be more susceptible to the paralysis than I was—I didn't sleep nearly so much. But, sleep or no sleep, it's an experience one doesn't care to have repeated."

Meanwhile the man from tomorrow, peering into space with staring eyes, seemed unaware of Cloud's remarks. "Do you know," he cried in wavering tones, as though some appalling thought had just occurred to him, "do you know—it comes over me, maybe you and I are all related in a distant way! What if some of you are my great-great-great-great grandfathers?"

Hearty laughter greeted this suggestion; but the solemn face of the man from tomorrow showed that the words had been spoken in deadly earnestness.

"No way of disproving it!" he sighed. "No way at all!" Indeed, it is only too likely! All of us have so many ancestors ten generations back! However, it's what I am now that counts, not what I come from!"

Though all of us were still smiling a bit, I am afraid that we were approaching the limits of our good humor; for the supercilious manner of the man from tomorrow was becoming galling in the extreme.

"Oh, you mustn't take personal offense, any of you," he resumed, as if reading our thoughts. "You're not responsible for your times. Really, I must say you're about the most tolerable set of men I've seen in this century. If only you were less ridiculously dressed, you might appear even in the twenty-third century without being noticed."

The speaker paused; but we all sat tense and silent, with ears alert and staring eyes.

"Of course, I couldn't say as much for most of your contemporaries," he added. "Now for example this morning, when I strolled along the streets, I took particular note of the passing faces. Never was the need of eugenic breeding so apparent to me before! Why, most of the men and women were of the type that would be marked 'Class D' or 'Culls' by our sociologists —the class forbidden to mate or rear children. What features they had! What features! It almost gives me nausea to think of them! Bloated and blotted! purple-veined and distorted! red-nosed and baggy-chinned! Fat as hogs or bony as vultures! Eyes dead as stone, or rapacious as carrion-birds! Lips ghastly with crimson paint, and cheeks deathly white as chalk. No trace of spirit left in any of them, no rapture, no loveliness, no hint of green fields, of blue skies, of dawn or sunset, but only the drabness and foulness of the clay! Faugh! When I remember them, I think of the caricature that one of our artists once made, in which the souls of beasts were seen masquerading behind the clothes and forms of men!"

The passion with which Wormwood uttered these words was such that we all remained without speech.

It was a minute or two before any of us had anything more to say; then at last Professor Warrington saw fit to continue the questionnaire:

"You were telling us some facts about yourself, Mr. Wormwood. Maybe you would enlighten us a little further—we're more interested in hearing about your times than about ours. What did you say your profession was?"

"My profession," declared the man from tomorrow, with dignity, "is that of a Physical Researcher."

"A Physical what?"

"A Physical Researcher. In our times, the two important types of scientists are the Physical Researchers and the Psychical Researchers. As the means to a well-rounded education, I have of course studied extensively in both fields—but, my preferences running toward the Physical, I began to conduct investigations into Hyper-Space before I had completed my Adolescent Epoch, and in due time, as I have already told our host, was promoted to the charge of a Hyper-Space Observatory."

"I see. I see," declared Professor Warrington, although, from his puzzled manner, I feared that he did not see at all. And now, I wonder, would you mind if I were to ask a very personal question?"

"Go ahead," encouraged the man from tomorrow. "I have no secrets to hide."

"Well then, just for the sake of comparing your times with ours, maybe you would tell us how much salary you earned?"

"The same as every one, of course! A thousand tantrums a year!"

"How much is that?"

The man from tomorrow hesitated. "I really don't know what to say. It is a thousand tantrums, that's all—which is estimated as the amount necessary to keep a single person in comfort for a year. Hence it is the amount which every one receives for his specialized services to the government."

"And is that all that any one may earn?"

"By no means. If you make anything extra for outside activities or especially meritorious services, you are free to devote the surplus to some public work."

"Can't you use it for yourself?"

"Oh, yes, I suppose you could—if you wanted to. But who would want to?—except, of course, some egocentric individuals of a type which, fortunately, is very rare. To be able to make some distinctive contribution to the public welfare is considered such an honor that there is a tremendous competition to achieve it. It is regarded as the ultimate mark of success."

The speeding pencils of several listeners noted down these remarks. But before they had finished, Professor Rushmore made himself heard again:

"You said something about being a single person, Mr. Wormwood. Then I take it that you have never been married?"

"Never—what?" demanded the man from tomorrow, screwing up his eyes in perplexed inquiry.

"Never married!"

The perplexity of the man from tomorrow only deepened. "I didn't quite catch that word. Would you mind repeating it?" he requested.

"I asked if you were never married."

"Married? Married? I—I really don't know," he admitted, with a hopeless nod in Rushmore's direction. "Is it anything that's done to one by way of chastisement?"

At this we all burst into laughter, in which Wormwood did not share.

"The word, I fear, is not one to be found in our vocabulary," he concluded. "Possibly it is no more than twentieth century slang?"

"On the contrary, it is the most serious word in English," announced Professor Rushmore, severely. "It means—well, when a man and woman became husband and wife."

Instantly a light came into Wormwood's face. "Oh, why didn't you say so? You want to know if I am mated. Why, no, I'm ashamed to say—no, I'm not, though I've advanced well into the Epoch of Ascendance. Don't imagine, though, that I haven't been passed by the Eugenics Commission. I was pronounced Double A mental type. But until lately I was so preoccupied with my work that I had no thought to give to my duties to society. It was only recently, when I met Maranna, that I decided to be mated. The event was to have taken place—well, it was to have taken place very, very soon."

The words of the man from tomorrow trailed to a doleful conclusion. His blue eyes were dimmed and flooded; his twisted features, furrowed into tight and pathetic lines, looked even more twisted than usual. "I—I had forgotten again," he muttered, brokenly, "The event is not to take place for more than three hundred years yet!"

Such was the strength of his grief that he had to turn from us, clenching his fists and biting savagely into his lips.

I thought that the questionnaire had now proceeded far enough. It was time to get down to the real business of the evening—time to decide what was to be done with the man from tomorrow; time to ask ourselves what aid could be given to Mr. Cloud and his invention. Without further delay, accordingly, I mentioned both these matters, beginning with the affair of

Cloud and the Dimension Machine; and, after half-an-hour's discussion, I was gratified to be able to accept Professor Warrington's suggestion that Cloud be recommended as this year's recipient of the annual Enderby Award for Scientific Research, and that meanwhile we make up a small collection to reestablish him in his laboratory.

Turning to the problem of the man from tomorrow, we had even more of an enigma to solve; he appeared so clearly out of place in this century, that almost anything which we proposed seemed likely to be the wrong thing. One of my visitors advised that Wormwood be lodged in a downtown hotel, but this idea I emphatically vetoed, for I foresaw that he would be ejected if not jailed within twenty-four hours; another favored a boarding house, but this again seemed needlessly cruel, since Wormwood, not being a meat-eater, would probably have starved; a third suggested that we find him a home with some quiet private family; but here once more I objected, since I did not believe the family existed which would be able to endure his ways.

Finally, after we had debated for more than an hour and no solution seemed forthcoming, Professor Warrington offered the saving proposal:

"Why not bring him as our guest to the Faculty Club? We can all go partners on his expenses, and will probably be more than repaid by the scientific information he will offer us. Besides, since we will have him directly under our eyes, he will not be apt to make any very serious blunders through ignorance of modern ways."

"Just the idea, Warrington!" ejaculated Professor Carroway, enthusiastically. "I think that solves the problem!"

"Yes, that solves it!" agreed Professor Rushmore and Professor Thornwell in one voice.

And thus the matter, apparently, was settled.

But the man from tomorrow had still to be heard.

"Your offer, no doubt, is very kind, and I thank you for it," he declared, coolly. "Just the same, how do you know that I will enjoy living in this Faculty Club of yours? What if it should have only the primitive housing accommodations common in your age? I am already getting used to my present quarters, and the effect of a change might be disastrous to one of my susceptibilities. I believe, therefore, that I shall remain where I am."

Here, indeed, was an unlooked for obstacle! Now that we had nicely disposed of the man from tomorrow, was he to persist in rejecting the new arrangements? Already I had seen enough of his eccentricities to know that this was far from unlikely; and I shuddered as I thought of the possibility that he would remain beneath my roof. Already my domestic peace had been profoundly enough disturbed! Already my wife had complained sufficiently as to how the man from tomorrow had attempted to admit air by removing the window sashes from their frames, and how he had faded her precious Tavelyn rugs by letting in the sunlight!

Reflecting that, were he to remain with us much longer, it would be time for me to leave, I addressed Wormwood with considerable asperity. "No doubt you do not realize, sir, when you are being well treated. No doubt it honors me to have the representative of a superior century in my home. I will admit that I should feel grateful. But I do not mind informing you—and you may paralyze me, if you wish, for my truthfulness!—that never before has my house been so violently disturbed as since your arrival!"

"Thank you," responded Wormwood, with a bow. "Now, at last, everything is clear to me. I appreciate your frankness in pointing out the facts, and value your friendship all the more in consequence. Now would you mind telling me, just what advantages would I have in this Faculty Club of yours?"

"The greatest advantages this century can offer," stated my colleague Warrington, coming calmly to the rescue. "I should arrange that for you, I promise, Mr. Wormwood. You would have the freedom of the Campus. You would be able to visit the classes and lecture rooms at will. You would see how a twentieth century University functions. You would acquire an education in present-day habits, standards and thoughts. In other words, you would equip yourself for life in the twentieth century."

"Good!" exclaimed the man from tomorrow, with enthusiasm. "Why didn't you explain before? That is the very thing I have been wanting! Of course, I accept only too gladly!"

Thereupon it was agreed that I was to escort Wormwood to his new home on the following morning; and then, while I thanked my friends for their cooperation and promised to care for Dr. Stoner till he revived from his paralysis, the meeting quietly adjourned.

CHAPTER XIII

A Nerve-Racking Expedition

BEFORE accompanying the man from tomorrow to the University, I risked another quarrel for the sake of his appearance.

Hitherto, as I have stated, he had worn no clothes other than a shirt, sandals and trousers—certainly not enough, I thought, to enable him to make a respectable entry at college! And so, after heated argumentation and long persuasion, I induced him to wear an old coat of mine which, while not matching the rest of his apparel, appeared considerably better than no coat at all. Despite all my pleas, he remained adamantine in refusing the use of collar and cravat; nor could I induce him to don a pair of shoes. I did, however, persuade him to accept an old pair of tennis slippers, which I found in the attic; and at the same time he consented reluctantly to wear socks, although without the assistance of garters.

"See how bit by bit my freedom is being checked and curbed!" he complained, when finally he was arrayed in his new outfit. "Alas! you people of the twentieth century give so much thought to what a man wears. In the twenty-third century, we pay heed only to what a man is."

"Clothes make the man," I dogmatized, forced to take refuge in platitudes.

"Clothes make the scarecrow!" he flung back, vehemently. "A well-clad doll may outdress an emperor!"

Seeing no point in pursuing the discussion, I merely shrugged, and suggested, "Well, Wormwood, let's be going. We'll have to set out early if I'm to show you around before my classes begin."

"I'm all ready," declared the man from tomorrow.

Before leaving, he bade an effusive farewell to my wife, whose face shone with undisguised relief; then, scoffingly refusing the hat which I put out for him, he joined me bareheaded in my journey toward the Campus.

The greater part of the journey was to be made by subway; and though not a long trip, as subway expeditions go, it seemed long enough by the time we had reached our destination.

As we descended the stairway at one of the express stations, I noticed that my companion was holding up his nose and sniffing the air in a peculiar manner. His steps hesitated and faltered; he drew back as if uncertain whether or not to proceed. "Aren't you making a mistake?" he inquired. "Surely, you don't

want to endanger your health in this pestiferous basement!"

"It isn't a basement!" I assured him. "It's a subway!"

"Subway? Subway?" he returned; and again he sniffed the air appraisingly. "You don't say so? Why, I should never have guessed it. The air doesn't seem to be ozonized at all!"

"Ozonized?"

"Unozonized subways," he continued, as he still hesitated halfway down the stairs, "have been forbidden by all modern Boards of Health, regardless of the protests of the Gravediggers' Union and the Undertakers' Association. So do you really expect me to venture down there? Remember, I haven't acquired the immunity that springs from long practice."

"Come, come, Wormwood, don't be foolish," I appealed, as I half coaxed him, half dragged him down the stairs.

But his pale features were crossed with an expression of fear, and he still drew back. "No doubt you haven't even any Solar Energizers, with their life-giving sun-like rays," he continued, irrepressibly. "No, I'm sure you haven't. They weren't invented before the Decade of the Ultra-Violet Beam. Ah, well, since I can't wait that long, I shall have to take my chances now, I suppose!"

Still sniffing, he allowed me to accompany him down the stairs, to deposit his fare for him, and to push him through the turnstile. Then all at once a disturbing incident occurred. Some hurried strap-hanger, emerging from a local train and tearing across the platform toward the closing doors of an express, apparently neglected to see Wormwood in his haste, and ran into him with such speed, that the two of them fell together in a sprawling heap. Fortunately, my companion was not badly injured, for he had the good luck to come down on top of another passenger; but never before had I seen any man quite so infuriated. There was murder glaring in his eyes; his hand, which flashed into his pocket to draw forth a concealed weapon, would surely have been guilty of a paralyzing deed—had not his intended victim wriggled through the almost closed door of the express train barely in time to avert his wrath.

"The ruffian! Brigand! Assassin! By the stars, what does this mean?" the man from tomorrow demanded, as he picked himself up and mournfully rubbed a bruised shin. "Do the police usually allow lunatics at large?"

"The man is not a lunatic," I corrected. "And not a ruffian, either. "Probably nothing but an overworked business man."

"He looked much more like a maniac to me!" insisted Wormwood. "So then? Is this a typical subway rider? And typical subway manners?"

"Yes, quite typical," I was forced to admit.

The man from tomorrow said nothing in reply, but I saw that he was edging toward the stairway, and probably would have made his escape had the crowds not been descending so impetuously that he feared to be knocked over again.

"Heaven preserve me!" he muttered, mopping his brow. "What a headache I have! It's like being in jail—once you get in, there's no way out till your sentence is up!"

He was now gasping so heavily for breath, that, in any other place, his efforts would have attracted attention. I was just a little concerned about him but, attributing the trouble to the after-effects of his fall, I tried to dismiss it from my mind. "Our train will be here in a minute," I said—and, just at that moment, it came shooting down the track, with a flashing of green lights and a thundering and grinding of wheels and brakes.

The man from tomorrow flung both hands to his ears. "Just listen to it! Just listen to it!" he moaned. "What a commotion!"

His succeeding words were drowned out by the uproar of the train, but I thought I could make out something about "unmuffled noises" and "disgrace of not having a Friction Silencer."

Firmly grasping his arm, lest he again attempt to escape, I guided him into the car, which, as usual at this time of the morning, was jammed almost to the doors. He was now panting rather piteously; and though, as I had swayed beside him on the platform, I consoled myself by reflecting that the ride would take only a few minutes, I did wonder whether it would not have been wiser to have traveled by taxi-cab.

Within a minute, I had my answer. All at once the man from tomorrow gave a gulp and a groan; every trace of color left his face; his eyes closed, and his knees sagged beneath him. Had I not reached out and grasped him, he would have fallen; even as it was, I was able to support him only by a staggering effort; while he hung in my hands, limp and loose, as a sack of beans.

Now what frantic thoughts and visions assailed me! What if the man from tomorrow should die? What if the subway had been too much for his frail constitution? Smitten by fiery pangs of conscience, I accused myself in unsparing terms; I told myself that I had had no right to expose my charge to an unfamiliar and deadly mode of travel. Surely, it would be a pitiable thing if he, our only recorded visitor from a future century, should perish prematurely, a victim of the haste and bustle of our age!

Shaken by such fears, I found myself in the center of an excited crowd, which had cleared a space for the stricken man on the floor of the car. "Air! Air! Give him air!" I cried, seeing how closely the spectators were swarming about him. But they pressed in around him more closely than ever, while gibbering like silly children, "What's happened? What's happened? Is he drunk? Fainted? What's the matter? What's the matter?" Some idiot even had the audacity to murmur into my ear, "Never fear, sir. Your son will be all right." And all the while Wormwood, lying motionless with a placid expression, looked more like a corpse than a living man.

Bending down to him, I loosened his clothing—although, for that matter, it seemed to me plentifully loose already; I fanned him with my hands, I rubbed his limbs, and then, accepting a flask passed me by some obliging person, I pressed a forbidden stimulant anxiously to Wormwood's lips.

Immediately, as though at some magical stroke, a tremor passed through his body; his hands began to twitch and flutter; his lips quivered, and gave expression to a faint groan; his eyes opened—and he looked up at us in a dazed, blank way.

"Maranna!" he mumbled, like one not quite in possession of his senses. "Maranna! Where have you gone?"

And then, as his wits gradually returned and he was able to sway upward to a sitting posture, he put his hands to his eyes, and demanded, gloomily, "Oh, why did you do it? Why did you wake me up? I thought I was back in the twenty-third century—back again with Maranna! Her arms were about me—we were so happy together! Oh, why, why did I have to return here?"

Several of the spectators smiled or tittered; but, thinking Wormwood delirious, they made little com-

ment. Two or three of us joined forces to help him to his feet; and then, since we had just arrived at our station, I thanked my assistants, and did my best to escort my companion out of the car and up the stairs to the street.

At first he walked with such slow and wavering footsteps that I feared he was about to collapse again; but once we had gotten out of the subway and into the comparatively pure air of the street, he heaved a mighty sigh and drew a long breath, then threw out his chest and exclaimed, "I guess I'm better now! My head still aches, but that will pass in time. Do you know, that subway had me pretty nearly asphyxiated!"

Much to my relief, he had now recovered sufficiently to walk the block or two to the Campus. It is true that he looked unusually bloodless and pale; yet it was clear to me that the danger was over for the present. But inwardly I vowed that never again would I enter the subway with him.

In silence we reached the University grounds and passed the main buildings, including administration offices, dormitories and lecture halls. Then, looking up at the eight and ten story buildings that housed one of our country's foremost educational institutions, the man from tomorrow suddenly demanded:

"Well, when do we get to the University?"

I looked at him in astonishment, trying to detect a glitter in his eyes. But there was no evidence that he was joking.

"How much further to the University?" he repeated, a little irritated at my silence.

"What makes you think it's any further?" I returned. "You're already on the Campus."

It was now his turn to be surprised. "This?—the Campus?" he inquired, slowly. "No, no, you don't mean it! Why, this is nothing but a part of the city!"

"Well, the University is a part of the city."

"But—but it's impossible!" he blurted out, in an unbelieving way. "Where are your green fields? Where are your groves, your brooklets and meadow-flowers? Where are your shady dells for class-rooms, your hills and woodland paths for thoughtful strolls? Why, this isn't a University! It's nothing but a pile of building! Looks more like a factory to me!"

"Maybe that's what it is," I acknowledged. "At any rate, it is a factory where we turn out trained minds.

"Trained minds cannot be made like trained monkeys!" snapped the man from tomorrow.

Then, more soberly, he remarked, "Really, I can't understand what you do with all these buildings—except maybe to use them as storage places for books and laboratory equipment. How can you expect to educate a man between walls? Don't you understand the cramping results of such repression? Why, psychologists have long ago pointed out what happens when we damn up the nature-impulses. I believe it was Harrington who, way back in the twenty-first century, demonstrated that, if the young mind is not brought into contact with the open, it will develop an Artificiality Bias, which will dry up the juices of mental spontaneity and deaden it to civilizing influences—and, in particular, to the imaginative and poetic instincts. Ever since Harrington's enunciation of this fundamental truth, no man has been regarded as really educated unless he has spent several years in contact with the out-of-doors.

In reply to this harangue, I could do nothing but grunt.

By this time, fortunately, we had arrived at the Faculty Club. It was a relief to be able to enter; to be able to attend to such mundane matters as to introduce Wormwood to the clerk and to list his name on the register before having him shown up to his room. Yet a further difficulty now intervened; disdaining the elevator, which, it seemed, was without "pneumatic jerk-eliminators," the man from tomorrow declared that he had had sufficient experience with twentieth century modes of transportation, and insisted on walking up to his quarters on the fourth floor.

As I puffed and panted at his side up the long wearisome flights, I reflected that it was fortunate that he had not been assigned to lodgings on the twelfth story.

CHAPTER XIV

The Man from Tomorrow Looks at Science

AFTER the man from tomorrow had been installed in his new room—which, he declared, would have suited him perfectly had it but possessed removable walls—he announced himself ready to set out with me to inspect the University. Not knowing exactly what to do with him, since it was almost time for me to lecture in the Freshman Course on "Tendencies in Modern Physics," I suggested that he accompany me and join the audience. This he eagerly consented to do, stating that it would be interesting to learn how far the science of the Neurotic Age had advanced. And so off we trotted together, and within a few minutes had reached the lecture room. He was astonished at the vastness of the hall, with its long sloping rows of seats that accommodated hundreds of students; at first, indeed, he mistook the place for a theatre, and would not believe that he was in a classroom. "What is the use of lecturing to so many persons all at once?" was his bewildered inquiry. "How enter into any personal discussions? And, without personal discussions, who would not prefer a book to a lecture?"

"Better wait and find out," was all I could advise.

Fortunately, it was almost time for the lecture to begin, so that I was under no necessity of continuing the discussion. Mounting to the platform, I looked briefly over my notes, while the students pressed into the room by the drove, and the man from tomorrow seated himself expectantly in the center of the front row.

The subject which I had chosen was, "Recent Theories as to the Nature of the Physical Universe." The choice was an appropriate one, I thought; I knew that the man from tomorrow would be critical of all that I said, and I could think of no more impressive subject of discussion than the revelations of those great modern physicists who had revolutionized our ideas of space and matter. And so I discoursed energetically upon recent investigations into the atom and the electron; while, during the latter half of the hour, I turned to one of the foremost of all the moderns, Einstein, and briefly outlined his contributions.

This was, of course, a great deal of territory to cover in an hour's lecture; but, though there were necessarily vast gaps and omissions, I thought that I had succeeded at least in conveying some idea of the essentials of the subject.

From time to time, during the course of my talk, I glanced down at the man from tomorrow, whose eyes were glued upon me in rapt attention. At first I observed an expression of puzzled questioning on his face; but after a while, when I had advanced to the heart of my subject, I noticed that the puzzled look gave place to a faint smile, which gradually deepened and broadened and never left him during the entire period.

Irritated at the thought that Wormwood was secret-

ly laughing at me, I lost no time about seeking the cause when the lecture was over. "Do you think you were attending a vaudeville?" I inquired, rather sharply. "Do you find modern physical knowledge altogether ridiculous? Is it really so exceedingly amusing to you?"

"Well, how could it help being just a little amusing?" he returned. "Remember, Physical Research is my especial field. And when I hear you mention some of the beginners, such as Michelson and Einstein, is it strange if I find it entertaining? Not that these men were not accomplished enough in their way—one must judge them in the light of their times. They are not without historic importance, due to the fact that they paved the way for the Astro-Physical demonstrations of Hylitz and the Psycho-Physical Cosmo-Conception of Van der Street."

"Who was Van der Street?" I asked.

But Wormwood continued, without seeming to hear me:

"Now what strikes me as strange—I might say elementary in your beliefs—is their one-sidedness. It is curious that, having identified energy and matter as, at root, one and the same thing, you haven't gone a step further and realized how the third great factor in the universe is to be linked to the other two. By that I mean, of course, the factor of spirit. It was the renowned Japanese psychologist, Hikomo Kiakawi, who, late in the twenty-second century, demonstrated that the energy of our minds is at heart one with the energy of matter, and that the whole universe, as in the conception of the great idealistic philosophers, can thus be reduced to nothing but spirit. This belief, the basis of twenty-third century Physical Research, is regarded as rudimentary by the scientists of my own times, and no Physical Researchers would think of disregarding the established facts. Naturally, therefore, your own views impressed me—well, shall I say somewhat as you might be impressed by old Ptolemy's ideas of astronomy?"

As he concluded these remarks, the man from tomorrow broke into a smile that was dangerously close to laughter; while I, helpless before his superior knowledge, could only stare and nod, and secretly wish that he would keep his information to himself.

A few minutes later, hoping to get rid of him for a while—for I could think of nothing more maddening than to have him at my side all day—I hastily introduced him to some of my fellow professors, and was relieved to see him go ambling away at the side of Dr. Ambrose, of the Department of Astronomy.

For an hour or two, consequently, I was mercifully able to forget all about him. But alas! my good fortune was Dr. Ambrose's ill luck; that very noon the astronomer waylaid me as I was leaving my office to go to lunch, and the things he had to say were neither kindly nor polite.

"Sacred heavens, Howard!" he burst out, grasping my arm in a manner that struck me as almost pugnacious, "who was that lunatic you let loose on me? What asylum did he come from? Did you mean it as a practical joke? If so, it was a cruel one——"

"Sorry, Ambrose," said I, consolingly. "Sorry, I forgot to tell you he's a traveler from far away." And briefly I explained the facts.

"Well, that seems to account for things," declared Ambrose, somewhat mollified. "I never did see a man with such preposterous ideas. Let me tell you what happened. First of all, trying to be pleasant to him, I described our modern astronomical progress, and mentioned the 200-inch refracting telescope, the largest in the world, that is being made with such long-drawn-out labor and at such prodigious expense. What do you suppose?—the man looked actually scornful. He said it was all right for practice work; would do for Freshmen classes and the like. But he wanted to know if we didn't have any 800-inch or 1000-inch refractors. Upon receiving a negative answer, he looked a little contemptuous, and said that our science had a long ways to go yet. Then he wanted to know whether we had discovered the fifth planet beyond Neptune, a speck smaller than the earth, which he described as revolving at a distance of 9,200,000,000 miles from the sun. Also, he wanted to know whether we had never seen the moving shadows on Mars, which, he claimed, were believed to be either airships or gigantic winged animals. But they couldn't be seen except through instruments that brought Mars within twenty-five miles."

"That's really interesting! Very interesting!" I commented. "Maybe he knows whether or not Mars is inhabited!"

But Dr. Ambrose, disregarding my remarks, hastily went on to explain, "Naturally, I listened to him as one listens to a drunken man; I thought he was suffering from insane delusions. I wasn't particularly pleased when he followed me to my class-room, and took a seat under my very nose; and I wouldn't have permitted him to stay, if he hadn't been so insistent on remaining. Well, I can assure you, I wish I had thrown him out. I have been teaching a good many years, but never before have I been so insulted! The conduct of this Mr. Wormwood was outrageous! Do you want me to go on?"

"I'm listening," said I; while, with a sinking sensation I wondered how many persons the man from tomorrow had paralyzed.

Dr. Ambrose hesitated; stroked his beard angrily: and, with one fist clenched, continued, "It was in the midst of the lecture. I had been discussing the nebular hypothesis. After briefly describing the views of Laplace, I came down to modern conceptions, mentioning the beliefs of Moulton and Chamberlain and other recent investigators. All at once, when I had paused for breath, I heard a voice, in the strange, heavy accentuation of your friend, "But all that, sir, is discarded theory! Modern research has shed new light on the subject!"

"Can you imagine my embarrassment? My students, of course, began to titter and giggle, finding the interruption, I am sure, more interesting than the lecture. And meanwhile that damnably insolent fellow, who seems to think that he knows everything under the sun, continued to speak, as though he were delivering the lecture, and not I! He made quite a talk, I can assure you! I tried constantly to interrupt him, but it was no use—he went right on and on and on. I forget all that he said, except that he mentioned dozens of names I'd never heard of before, and became excited about something which he called the Star-Swarm Theory of Solar Evolution—the details of which I couldn't quite make out, although I understood him as saying that most reputable scientists accepted it. This, of course, made me angrier than ever—was he trying to imply that I was not a reputable scientist? You can take my word, it was a relief when he at last took his seat; but, from the way my students were snickering and laughing, it was clear that they wouldn't have minded if he'd kept right on till the end of the hour."

"Really, I'm surprised that he didn't," said I, happy in the knowledge that, after all, no one had been paralyzed. "Modesty is not exactly Mr. Wormwood's leading merit."

"Well, he's your friend, not mine. . . . Now just a word of advice, Howard," was Ambrose's parting shot, as his great gaunt form made ready to go shuffling off

down the aisle. "Don't introduce this Wormwood too promiscuously—not if you don't want to become the most unpopular man on the Campus!"

In defiance of this suggestion, which, unquestionably, had much good, sound sense behind it, a plan was soon to be launched to make the man from tomorrow much more widely known. That very noon the idea was proposed to me by Dr. Horn and Professor Warrington, with whom I chanced to have lunch.

"Horn and I have been talking about Mr. Wormwood," began the latter gravely. "After all, it is a notable thing to have a visitor from another century, and so we have been thinking that it would be only fair to give a public reception in his honor. Besides, there are many of our colleagues who would like to make his acquaintance—and I cannot think of any better way than to give a dinner, let us say, at the Faculty Club, to which as many as possible would be invited."

"No doubt there is something to be said for the idea," I responded, not exactly enthusiastically. "In the case of an ordinary visitor, it would be the courteous thing. But I —well, to be quite frank, I'm not quite sure that Mr. Wormwood would know how to act at a public reception."

"Nonsense!" denied Warrington, impatiently. "The man doesn't lack intelligence!"

"No—not intelligence. What he lacks is—well, a knowledge of our ways. I should therefore advise that, if you do hold a reception, you wait a while yet."

"On the contrary," dissented Warrington, becoming so excited that he upset his water glass and drenched his mashed potatoes, "we were figuring on holding it as early as possible. You see, the facts about this Wormwood are bound to get out sooner or later—sooner rather than later, I'm afraid—and if we wait too long we'll lose all the credit of discovering him. That's the reason for this reception, at which the facts about him are to be made known."

"Yes, that's it exactly!" reiterated Dr. Horn. "Think what a feather it will be in our caps! Think what luster it will shed upon our University! Why, it will make us world-famous! A man from another century —what other institution of learning could boast such a contribution?"

"What other institution, indeed?" Warrington took up the argument. "Why, man, haven't you considered the increased endowments it will bring us—the funds from wealthy stock brokers, oil magnates, and other patrons of the arts! I don't want to be over-enthusiastic, but I predict that it would do us almost as much good as a championship football team!"

"Well, perhaps not quite that much good," denied the conservative Dr. Horn. "But as much as could be expected from any scientific achievement!"

"After all," I reminded my friends, "you must remember that neither we nor the University have really anything to do with Wormwood's being here. It is Mr. Cloud that deserves the credit."

Professor Warrington looked annoyed, and absently fumbled at a crust of bread, which he broke into crumbs and discarded. "Yes, yes, of course, we'll not deny him his bit of praise," he declared, hastily. "Still, the real making of Mr. Wormwood rests with us. That is why the reception will be indispensable."

Personally, I still did not consider the reception indispensable—a fact of which I tried my best to convince my friends. But I was outvoted two to one; and, what was worse, I was powerless to prevent them from proceeding with their plans. The most that I would vouchsafe them was my consent to be present at the party; and they, well pleased with this concession, which I had granted reluctantly beneath the compulsion of their combined attack, assured me that they would lose no time about proceding with their scheme, and that it would not be more than a week before the man from tomorrow shone in the limelight of recognition.

CHAPTER XV

The Guest of Honor

WHEN a committee headed by Dr. Horn visited the man from tomorrow to inform him that he was to be the guest of honor at a public reception, he received his callers most graciously, although, it is said, his attitude was that of one who knowingly receives no more than his due.

"Certainly, you may count upon my presence," he assured the members of the delegation. "I am to be the guest of honor, you say? Well, it shall give me pleasure to honor you."

Thereupon he bowed low in his courteous twenty-third century fashion; and then, when some one opened his mouth to speak, he hastily added, "No, no, don't mention it. It's perfectly all right—no need for thanks. I too am honored, I assure you. Now when, did you say, is this notable event to take place?"

The proposed date was stated; after which Dr. Horn made bold to request, "We shall of course expect a little after-dinner talk from you, Mr. Wormwood. Nothing very long—a few minutes, at most. I thought it best to notify you in advance."

"That was most considerate," declared Wormwood, with another bow. "Naturally, I would have prepared a talk anyhow. There is so much I have been wanting to say, and this should give me the opportunity to say it."

"The pleasure will be all ours," returned Dr. Horn, as the committee prepared to leave.

Even after Wormwood had accepted the invitation, there remained one or two knotty problems to be solved. The reception was to be a formal affair—and would it not therefore be impossible for the guest of honor to appear in the highly informal apparel he had previously worn? It was not without misgivings that Professor Warrington put the question to me; yet I, profiting from past experience, resolutely refused to have anything to do with the matter, leaving it to Warrington and two of his associates to visit the man from tomorrow and induce him to wear a borrowed full-dress suit. I do not know exactly what transpired at this meeting, but I do know that it lasted for over an hour, and that when at length the three professors returned they were red-faced and scowling.

"Whew!" burst forth Warrington, as he flung himself down into a chair and fervidly mopped his brow. "That was worse than driving nails into steel plate! You ought to have heard how he harangued upon the savagery of twentieth century dress! Said it subserved neither comfort, beauty nor health!—represented a form of slavery for the benefit of the garment makers and sellers! Ye gods! What an imbecile!"

"Well, did you show him his error?" I inquired.

"Show him his error? How could I? It would be as easy to reason with a block of wood. He remained unconvinced till the end. But, thank heaven! he did make one concession. He agreed to wear a suit for a single evening, provided we never asked him to humiliate himself again. Humiliate himself!—think of it!—that's the expression he used! Never once occurred to him to thank us for renting the suit at our own expense!"

"Thought we should thank him instead! His air was that of a martyr!" put in another member of the visiting committee. "You should have seen his grim, re-

signed expression; you would have thought he was being crucified! Even so, I don't believe he would have agreed, if it hadn't been, as he said, that he wanted to try every variety of twentieth century experience, even the most deadly, so as to be able to form a fair estimate of our times."

Although Wormwood may not have taken to the idea of wearing formal dress, it is certain that he did regard his prospective speech as of high importance. During the entire day preceding the reception, he was not to be seen about the Campus; he did not visit the class-rooms nor spend his hours reading at the University library, as had been his wont ever since his installation at the Faculty Club; he immured himself in his room, where he remained throughout the day; he gave orders that no one be permitted to see him, and was scarcely heard from except when, every hour or two, he sent down to the clerk for a new supply of letter paper. It was remarked that the man from tomorrow must have a voluminous correspondence; however, it was noted that he asked for no stamps. But it was not until the following day that the mystery was solved, when one of the chamber maids found the waste basket full of discarded letter paper, on which various queer notations had been recorded and crossed out in a big, heavy hand: "My friends of the twentieth century, the pleasure that I bring you today——"; or, "Fellow guests and diners, as the poet Gandolini remarked, in the first part of that great lyric cycle which took the twenty-second century by storm——"; or, again, "My kind hosts and hostesses, on this occasion I think sadly of another party I attended, in the Decade of the Lunar Flight, three hundred years to come——"

It speaks well for Wormwood's powers of concealment that, until after the reception, no one suspected what prodigies of creation he had undertaken. It is true that, when he made his appearance that evening, he was looking noticeably worn, and was even paler than usual; but we attributed this to the strain and excitement of the event, no less than to the inconvenience of his formal attire. All in all, he did not appear to be at his best; something seemed to have gone out of him as he faced us in his immaculately white starched shirt and swallow-tail coat; it was as if his very personality had been starched as well. There was little vim and spontaneity about him; the light in his eyes was grave and subdued, the expression on his well-razored features was just a little shamefaced, and his hands were fumbling constantly at his collar, as though he still could not reconcile himself to its use.

"You know, I feel just as if I'm choking," he said to me, drawing me into a corner apart from the other guests. "Really, I never thought I'd descend to this. How keep my self-respect if I'm to put my limbs into a cage? This halter of mine"—once more he tugged impatiently at his collar—"strikes me as the symbol of the sameness, the artificiality, the obstructing conventionality of twentieth century life."

"Oh, come, come, it isn't so bad as all that," I reprimanded, weary of the incessant complaints of the man from tomorrow. "One must endure something for the sake of society. ... . Tell me, how do you like the arrangements made in your honor?"

Approvingly I pointed to the decorated hall, with its ferns and palm-leaves and its softly glowing red and orange lights.

"Oh, it's all very interesting!" he acknowledged. "Quite quaint and interesting! To be sure, it's insufferably hot, since you haven't arrived at the modern practice of holding receptions in the open air. Again, I can never get used to those electric lights of yours. They are so hard on the eyes; they seem to unnatural. Now with inter-atomic lighting——"

At this point, much to my relief, we were interrupted by the approach of a small group of guests who, escorted by Professor Warrington, were anxious to be introduced to the man from tomorrow.

"Mr. Wormwood, meet Dr. Small. Mr. Wormwood, meet the Reverend Grislow," said Professor Warrington; and Wormwood, bowing graciously, shook both hands of each of the gentlemen in turn, after the practice of his own century. "I am flattered at the opportunity of making your acquaintance," he assured them, in the formal phraseology of three hundred years from now.

Then, turning to the Reverend Grislow, he remarked, "Pardon me, sir but I did not quite get your name. That is to say, not the first name."

"I did not mention his first name," interposed Professor Warrington, with a scowl. "I said he was the Reverend Grislow."

"The Reverend Grislow?" repeated the man from tomorrow, questioningly. "Reverend Grislow? Reverend, you say? I take it then, sir, that this is some title of distinction, conferred on you by the State in reward for some unselfish or benevolent deed."

"Why, why—not—not exactly," faltered Grislow, a little taken aback. "I am called Reverend—well, like all other wearers of the cloth, I am called Reverend because, you see, sir, I am a minister of the Gospel."

"No, I don't see," declared the irrepressible Wormwood. "Wearers of what cloth? And what is a minister of the Gospel?"

It was Professor Warrington who, leaping into the breach during the embarrassing silence that ensued, explained that a minister was a man of religion, a preacher, a leader in piety. And the Reverend Grislow finished by stating that he taught the religion of Christ, and "shepherded his little flock in the ways of righteousness."

The bewildered expression on the face of the man from tomorrow only deepened at this explanation.

"Man of religion! Leader in piety! Shepherding your little flock in ways of righteousness!" he echoed. "What does all this mean? Must a righteous man be led to do the needful thing? Does a pious person require a leader?"

"Oh, dear me, I see we haven't put matters properly at all!" murmured Grislow, greatly annoyed. "I see you've got a very wrong idea. What I really lead people in is their beliefs. They follow me in the doctrines I preach——"

"Follow you in the doctrines you preach!" thundered the man from tomorrow, not allowing Grislow time to finish. "If that isn't abominable! So the people of this century accept their beliefs like their clothes! All you have to do is to provide the pattern and the donkeys follow it! I see now! I see lots of things I could not understand before! I never could quite picture the state of mind of my ancestors before the Era of Emancipation put an end to group religion! But now it's all plain as day! There wasn't any state of mind! There was only blank obedience to a dogma!"

The Reverend Grislow opened his mouth to reply; but it seemed to me that he wore a wilted, hopeless expression, and was relieved to be able to slink away when the approach of several other guests offered him a chance to escape.

The man from tomorrow now entered into a discussion with Professor Handley, of the Department of Paleontology, and waxed eloquent regarding the twenty-third century discoveries of reptilian fossils. But suddenly, in the midst of the exposition of a new theory as to the extinction of the dinosaurs, all the ardor of his discourse deserted him; he stopped short, faltered, grew red in the face, and continued as if he

no longer felt any interest in the Age of Saurians. I noticed that his eyes were fastened upon a certain point halfway across the room, where several newcomers had just appeared, and where Dr. Horn was engaged in a voluble discourse with Miss Whitcomb. Had not Professor Handley been bent upon pursuing the question of dinosaurian extinction; had he not followed with some fluent remarks upon the racial term of life of the Brontosaurus, the Tyrannosaurus and other ancient monsters, I believe that the man from tomorrow would have made his immediate departure to the side of Dr. Horn's fiancée. As it was, Wormwood had to content himself with casting hungry glances in her direction, which she apparently neither noticed nor returned; while, by the time the paleontologist had thoroughly considered the problem of the Brontosaurus in all its various aspects and diverged into the kindred theme of the Pterodactyls, the moment had arrived for us all to take our places at the tables, and the man from tomorrow had lost all immediate opportunity for converse with his fair friend.

As the guest of honor, Wormwood was of course seated near the head of the table. To his left sat the Chairman, Professor Warrington; to his right was Professor Handley, who seemed delighted at the opportunity of continuing the discussion he had so interestingly begun; across from him was Mr. Cloud, for whom we had borrowed a suit for the occasion, and who looked somewhat stiff and seedy in his unaccustomed finery; while I was placed at Mr. Cloud's right, and next to me was Dr. Horn, at whose side Miss Whitcomb sat just out of reach of Wormwood's conversation, although by no means out of range of his admiring eyes. I shall not even attempt a list of the other men and women whose presence graced that splendid affair; I shall only state that, in addition to the President of the University and some of our leading Faculty Members, there was a United States Senator, a Federal Judge, and the editor of a leading newspaper; while two scientists of international repute, who chanced to be in town on a brief stay, had consented to attend the function. Possibly the man from tomorrow did not realize it, but a more brilliant group could not have been gathered to honor him had he been a visiting Crown Prince.

Instead of appearing pleased, however, he twitched nervously in his seat, and continued to pull and fumble at his collar throughout the greater part of the dinner; while on his face there was a bored expression that seemed to say, "Heavens! how soon will this be over?" He did not seem impressed when the Chairman proposed a toast to "Our guest of honor and the twenty-third century"; he looked as if he were about to yawn all during the Chairman's address, in which the circumstances of his arrival were described and his character and attainments were eulogized; while his eyes continued to seek out those of Miss Whitcomb with such brazenness that after a while the girl began to blush and made an obvious effort to avoid looking in his direction.

None the less, most of the guests seemed to be enjoying themselves; from all sides I heard the remark that never before, despite many sumptuous repasts, had so perfect a banquet been served at the Faculty Club. Surely, the chef had outdone himself! Fearing the criticism of posterity, as represented by our guest of honor, he had evidently spared no effort to produce masterpieces of the culinary art. But alas! All his exertions might have been spared, so far as the chief object of his attentions was concerned. For the man from tomorrow seemed incapable of appreciating masterpieces. When the caviar was brought on, he merely sniffed, made a wry face, and shoved the plate from him. "What is this foul-smelling concoction?" he asked, with his usual frankness. When the chicken soup appeared, he found a single whiff sufficient; when the oyster patties arrived, he tested one with an appraising fork, then suddenly elevated his nostrils, as if they had been assaulted by something vile and ordered the waiter to remove the dish at once. The fish and the roast left him with an expression of disgust that would have had to be seen in order to be appreciated; the potatoes he came near to sampling, when he discovered that they had been placed in contact with the gravy; the green peas he rejected for a similar reason; and the dessert—an elaborate bit of French pastry—he refused with some mumbled comment about "sickening sweetness." During the entire evening, the only things which I saw him consume were two radishes and a leaf of lettuce!

His abstemiousness was not unobserved by other persons. "You don't each much, I see, Mr. Wormwood," remarked Professor Handley, toward the conclusion of the meal. "Evidently you're not very hungry tonight."

"Not very hungry?" was Wormwood's surprising response, uttered with just a trace of indignation. "What makes you think so? Why, I'm ravenous as a wolf! I haven't had one good square meal yet this century! Oh, how I long for a good old-fashioned bean-feast! I've been losing weight steadily—I've gone down four pounds, and I've only been here a week!"

The man from tomorrow sighed; and immediately afterwards, being asked by the waiter whether he preferred tea or coffee, he mumbled, "Water, please!" Then, thrusting his untouched plate from him, he sighed once more, motioned the waiter back, and instructed, "Please, sir, no ice in the water!"

A few minutes later, when the guests were idling over their coffee and cigars, the outstanding event of the evening occurred—the after-dinner talk of the man from tomorrow. Chairman Warrington paved the way for his appearance by stating that he "would no doubt want to describe his impressions of the present century"; and Wormwood, rising amid profuse applause and bowing elaborately, did not have to be asked a second time.

"Ladies and gentlemen of the twentieth century," he began, in a rapid, heavy voice, "I want to begin by thanking you all, and particularly those of you whose friendship I have had the pleasure of making: Dr. Horn here; and Mr. Cloud; and Professor Howard; and Mrs. Howard, who, I regret to say, does not appear to be present today; and the Chairman, Professor Warrington; and Professor Carroway; and last, but not least"—here his eyes chanced to fall upon a fair feminine form across from him—"last but not least, the charming Alice—the charming Alice Whitcomb, who has shown me that not all the bewitching ladies were born in the twenty-third century."

The speaker paused long enough to wave gallantly in the direction of Miss Whitcomb, whose face had turned a flaming crimson, and who looked as if she would have liked to disappear beneath the table. Meanwhile one or two of the guests began to titter; some one else burst noisily into applause; while Dr. Horn, glaring sullenly at Wormwood, clenched his fists as though preparing for a hand-to-hand encounter.

Apparently not noticing the amusement that glowed from every face, the man from tomorrow proceeded:

"Our Chairman, I am surprised to say, has accurately divined the subject of this evening's talk. He is correct in conjecturing that I want to describe my impressions of the twentieth century. This, of course, is a subject so broad that it could be dealt with at the length of many volumes. But such extensive treatment not being possible tonight, I must confine myself

to certain minor aspects of the theme. My topic, ladies and gentlemen, is 'A Defense of the Twentieth Century.' For I believe that the twentieth century is worthy of defense. It makes me angry to remember the attacks that have been launched against it in my own times. Thus far I have had only a casual glimpse, yet I have seen enough to know that it is not so bad as it is represented to be. It is not true, as historians have recorded, that it was altogether an era of smoke and dust, of panicy striving that reached no goal, of senseless self-absorption, of delirious amusements, of pomp and vanity, of rags and gilded folly. Even less is it true that the age is one of unbridled superstition; indeed, the only superstition I have come across thus far is that certain bits of printed paper, which you seem to value above all else, can procure anything you wish beneath the sun. This naïve faith, which, so far as I have been able to observe, is shared by the more cultured classes no less than by the uncultured, is really less vicious than one might imagine; I assure you that I have been heartily amused by it. However, I am ready to concede to each age the right to its own foibles and eccentricities. Do not primitive peoples believe in the power of moon-gods and wind-gods? Did not the ancients conduct their human sacrifices? Did not the Dark Ages have their illusions and bloody wars?"

As the man from tomorrow proceeded, he had been waxing more and more oratorical; and his arms, outflung in eloquent gesticulations, had been performing such loops and spirals about the table, that I feared he would upset a decanter of water or a cup of hot coffee. Probably due to the effect of the unwonted exertion, he gasped and sputtered a little; and his hands, reaching more than once toward his collar, testified plainly to the source of the trouble. Finally, just as he had reached the most impressive point in his address, his patience seemed to attain its limits; up flew his hands once more, and, to my utter consternation, there came a ripping noise as the offending collar was torn out of place. There followed something that sounded like an oath—no one could make out the exact words, but perhaps it was twenty-third century slang; then the discarded article was tossed unceremoniously on to one of the chairs, and the speaker was ready to continue.

It is needless to describe how the audience stared and started; how the faces of the men were crossed with smiles and laughter; how some of the women turned away their eyes, and others wore an expression of shocked righteousness; while I for my own part, fearing that the worst was yet to come, sat peering at Wormwood's shirt with fascinated gaze, and was mightily relieved to see that it remained in place.

Meanwhile the man from tomorrow, apparently unaware that anything unusual had occurred, resumed his address with unperturbed eloquence:

"I was discussing, ladies and gentlemen, the superstitions of the twentieth century. I might add that that age had a right to be more superstitious than it actually was, considering how little was then known as to the nature of the universe. You must recall that the fundamental problems of science and philosophy were still as far from solution as in the day of Aristotle; that the nature of life was not understood, that its origin was unknown and its goal and meaning still matters of dispute, while scientists could not even say positively what energy it is that controls the universe, nor whether any man has lived before this life or is to live again. In an atmosphere mouldy with such ignorance, superstition is bound to thrive; and therefore we should not blame the men of the twentieth century if they were more deeply steeped in darkness than the dwellers in an emancipated age."

With a resounding thump, the man from tomorrow brought his fist down upon the table. Observing that several persons at the other end of the room were engaged in a whispered conversation and were apparently paying no attention to him, he pointed in the direction of the errant ones, and thundered, "If the gentlemen over yonder will have the courtesy to permit me, I still have a few more remarks to make!"

The gentlemen in question—who were none other than United States Senator Parkinson and Federal Judge Wilbert—dropped into silence, to the accompaniment of low, amused murmurs from all parts of the room.

Sonorously the man from tomorrow resumed, "The message which I bring to you today, my friends, is a message of consolation. However gloomy the signs appear; however deeply you may seem to be sunken in the mire of the abyss, remember that there is still hope for the present century. The Neurotic Age will not last forever; the Era of Enlightenment lies ahead. The pseudo-knowledge of your times will give place to true knowledge; the pseudo-science in which you place trust will be supplanted by true science; the savagery of your social customs will be tamed and overcome; the glory of a real civilization will yet overspread your land. Remember, if there were no darkness, we could not appreciate the light! Even though, in your own lives, you may not see it come to pass, you will know that it is being prepared for posterity.

"And now, my friends, by way of conclusion, I cannot think of anything more fitting than to quote briefly from one of my own contemporaries, the renowned poet Stanislaus Starvinowski, who summarizes my thoughts as ably as I could express them myself:

> " 'Our era is the ripened fruit,
> Of which past times were but the root.
> Yet roots are needed, though they grow
> Sunless in earth and mud below.' "

With a final emphatic gesticulation, the man from tomorrow took his seat. There was a momentary silence; then a low trickling of applause greeted him, about as faint and unenthusiastic as I have ever heard. But the man from tomorrow, mopping his brow and loosening the upper buttons of his shirt, looked as pleased as he was tired; while his eyes, fixed on a certain point across the table, restlessly sought and sought for an approving glance from a particular young lady, who seemed quite unaware of his interest and devoted herself to an energetic discussion with the gentleman to her right.

CHAPTER XVI

An Affair of the Heart

AFTER dinner the tables were cleared away, and an hour or two of dancing ensued. In this pastime, I observed, the man from tomorrow took no part; he remained standing at one end of the room, engaged in almost incessant conversation with various persons anxious for his opinion on this or that aspect of twentieth century life.

"What's the matter, Mr. Wormwood?" I finally heard Dr. Small inquire. "Don't you dance?"

"Dance?" returned Wormwood, apparently surprised at this question. "Of course not! My occupation is that of a Physical Researcher!"

This reply must have impressed Dr. Small queerly, for he immediately flung another question, to which the man from tomorrow made emphatic response:

"Naturally, I'm not expected to dance. My field of work is science, not esthetics. You see, among our peo-

ple the only ones that continue to dance beyond the Adolescent Epoch are those that take it up as an art, a life-work, giving public performances in the old Greek fashion, and striving to excel by their grace and beauty."

"But you do have dances—that is to say, our kind of dances?" persisted Dr. Small.

"Oh, yes, indeed! They are considered a suitable form of recreation for those in the Adolescent Epoch. As preliminaries to matrimony they have been found quite satisfactory; they are better than a public meeting bureau for the two sexes. Then, again, the particular variety of chatter which they encourage is well adapted to those in the Adolescent Epoch; they are excellent for persons who wish to shine by means of their feet rather than by their heads. Accordingly, those in the Epoch of Ascendance would as soon think of going to dances, as they would think of playing with dolls, tops or rattles!"

"I don't quite see how you make that out," Dr. Small dissented. "In our day, many grown-ups find real pleasure in dances."

"Perhaps that's because they are mentally still in the Adolescent Epoch," decided Wormwood, with a thoughtful expression.

Unfortunately, he did not see fit to continue the discussion, for at that moment he caught a glimpse of the tall form of Miss Whitcomb as she and a partner ambled gracefully across the further end of the hall. "Pardon—pardon me," he said, with a sudden air of excitement, and started to make his way through the crowd in her direction.

Curious to learn what would happen, I followed him, and was amused to observe his surprise and disappointment when, having reached his destination, he stopped short and let his eyes rove in vain in all directions. Evidently Miss Whitcomb had seen his coming! She was nowhere in sight!

"Just give me time! I'll find her yet!" I thought I heard the man from tomorrow muttering beneath his breath; or maybe it was only that he was mumbling a curse in the vernacular of the twenty-third century. At all events, I noticed how his eyes continued to search and search the audience, like those of a mother seeking a lost child—but all to no avail! His intended quarry must have been wary in the extreme, for it was not until the end of the evening, when the guests were preparing to leave, that his efforts were greeted with success.

Then, when Miss Whitcomb had momentarily left Dr. Horn's side and had slipped away to get her coat, I saw the man from tomorrow intercept her as she was about to enter the Ladies' Rest Room.

"Alice—Alice Whitcomb!" I heard him call. "Just one minute, please!"

"Well?" she demanded, coldly, looking up at him in a flustered way, for he had barred her path and there was no possibility of eluding him.

"Alice, why do you always treat me so cruelly?" he asked, with an affronted air. "What have I done to you? Have I offended in any way? I assure you, there is no one, in this century, whom I have less desire to offend."

"What do you want of me?" she gasped, looking up at him with an expression that seemed to add, "And what right, sir, have you to be calling me 'Alice'?"

"All evening I have been trying to get a word with you," he continued. "But somehow you always kept out of sight. Why? I ask you. Why, when one smile from you would suffice to crown the whole evening with success?"

"Mr. Wormwood, I must be hurrying along," she pleaded, and tried to pass him. But he, blocking her path, fervently continued, while with one hand he gesticulated violently, and, with the other, beat nervously at his half-unbared chest:

"It is not much that I ask, Alice. Only that we meet in more propitious circumstances. Otherwise, how are we to get to know one another? Tell me, will you not be in the lobby of the Faculty Club tomorrow—say, tomorrow at five? I will be waiting for you there. Remember the time. Five o'clock. Are you listening?"

"Yes!" she cried, in desperation; and then, breaking past her admirer, she dashed into the haven of the rest room.

The man from tomorrow, turning away, threw out his chest and smiled like one who has made a conquest.

"I have just arranged an appointment with a delightful young lady," he said, coming face to face with me, unconscious that I had overheard the conversation. "She is to meet me tomorrow at five o'clock at the Faculty Club."

Since the matter had been settled, it seemed useless for me to argue or comment; I merely grunted, and slipped away. Yet there was something in the beaming hopefulness of the man from tomorrow that made me feel just a little sorry for him, as for a child who seeks some bright plaything in vain. During the following day, the thought of him was frequently in my mind; and it may have been my curiosity on his account that turned my footsteps toward the Faculty Club shortly before six o'clock. I did not really intend to look for him; none the less, I could not have avoided him had I tried, for he was sitting near the entrance, his eyes fixed patiently upon the great clock above the doorway. "Waiting for some one, Wormwood?" I could not forbear to inquire; and he looked up at me with a start, and mumbled, "Yes. She seems to be late. Wonder what can be keeping her. Do you suppose she could have gotten the wrong time?"

"Not unlikely," said I, and passed on into the reading room, where I occupied myself for over half an hour.

When I came back, the man from tomorrow was still sitting in the same position, his eyes still fastened upon the clock; but over his face a pained, almost hopeless expression had settled.

This time he did not even seem to see me as I passed, and I did not pause to speak to him. As yet I did not realize how deeply he had taken the matter to heart; nor was the true state of affairs to become apparent to me until after several days.

It was on the following afternoon that Wormwood made an unconscious revelation. He and I, in company with Professor Warrington, were walking together just outside the Campus, when suddenly, without a word of apology, he broke away from us and rushed toward a tall woman examining the shop windows across the street. "Alice!" he cried, loudly enough for every one in the street to hear. Alice! Alice Whitcomb!"

In a startled manner, the woman turned about, revealing a face old enough to be that of Miss Whitcomb's mother. And Wormwood stopped short, gasped, muttered something half-intelligible, and returned to us with a sheepish expression.

"Do you know," he declared, ruefully, "she looked almost exactly like Alice. I could have sworn it was she."

During the next day or two, the man from tomorrow made no further reference to the subject; but that it was weighing upon his mind was evident. He had the harried look of one gnawed by some secret trouble; he had become nervous, irritable, absent-minded; his eyes frequently wore a far-away brooding expression, as though they were fixed upon something desired and withdrawn, something forbidden and unattainable.

Suddenly a new side of his character had been revealed; he seemed less remote from us, and more human than before; it was as if, by his foolhardy passion, he had established a new bond of fellowship with us.

Just to what depth—or heights—that passion could reach, was revealed to me before the end of the week, when I found Dr. Horn and Professor Carroway chuckling together over an ink-marked document which, I immediately judged, was not of an academic nature.

"What do you think? Our friend Wormwood has been playing the ardent romantic!" laughed Carroway, as I approached. "We've just been looking over one of his efforts. It certainly is a masterpiece of the epistolary art!"

"Masterpiece is the word!" agreed Dr. Horn. "But it wasn't meant for our profane gaze| Alice showed it to me last night—and I insisted on her letting me take it. Heavens! but we did have a hilarious time over it!"

"Come, let's see," I demanded.

Shamelessly they passed me the paper, which bore the heading of the Faculty Club; and shamelessly I read, in the handwriting of the man from tomorrow:

"Chivalrous Lady: I take the liberty of addressing you in this fashion, because I feel sure that one endowed with your grace of form and spirit must possess that full measure of chivalry which we of the twenty-third century ascribe to the Superior Sex. It is to your charity that I appeal, for even if you find it impossible to cast your eyes upon my unworthiness, still your gallant heart will not permit you to see me miserably drooping for lack of you. Already I have made repeated efforts to knock upon those doors which have so cruelly been closed upon me. At the reception the other night I had the happiness to make an appointment with you—but alas! some indisposition must have forbidden you to keep the date. Then in desperation I wrote to you, begging you to fix an hour for some new appointment. Three days have gone by, and no answer has come. I have been watching every post; I can no longer bear the suspense. So I entreat you—listen to one of the weaker sex, a poor imploring man, who casts aside the last veil of modesty to unbare his heart before you—I entreat you, chivalrous lady, do not scorn my plea, but mention a rendezvous, so that I may greet you and heal my bleeding wounds in the consolation of your assuaging presence.

"I pray you, do not deny me this boon, which I desire above all else in this century. For should you display that heartlessness so unnatural in one of your charm, there will remain only one course for me. Life in this generation will no longer have any value; I shall not continue to struggle through this sorry mockery of an existence. Within twenty-four hours, if I do not have your answer—a mercifully kind answer, O benevolent lady!—I shall seek the vial of release! I shall turn the poison darts against my own breast; I shall paralyze myself! And, until you relent, I shall remain paralyzed! Existence on any other terms is impossible!

"In conclusion, I bow before you, and humbly kiss your garment. Yours, in rapture and supplication,

"John."

It may have been hard-hearted of me, but I was smiling just a little by the time I had come to the end of this missive. "Evidently the style in love-letters will change a little by the twenty-third century," I remarked. "You don't think, do you, there's any danger of Wormwood carrying out his threat?"

Dr. Horn laughed shortly. "Oh, I don't suppose it would do him any harm to be paralyzed for a while. You know, when you come to think of it, isn't it an infernal nerve of his, troubling Alice with all this sort of bosh? The poor girl was quite upset about it at first, although in the end, after I'd pointed out how funny it really was, she almost cried with laughing. Considering all things, I do wish Wormwood would paralyze himself for a few days. That might give him time to cool off."

Afraid that our visitor would actually carry out his threat, I observed him with more than usual interest during the next day or two. I had already seen enough of the paralyzing rays to feel sure that I could recognize their effects—but I am certain that no sign of paralysis was to be noted in the man from tomorrow. Perhaps it was that, like other great lovers, he was mightier with words than with deeds; or perhaps there was so much to occupy his mind and engage his energies that he could not afford the luxury of paralysis. Personally, I am inclined to the latter theory; for, at about this time, Wormwood was coming prominently into public attention, and there were such endless varieties of things for him to do and see and such endless processions of visitors that the detail of an unsuccessful love affair was likely to be shoved on to a back have received.

It was immediately following the reception that Wormwood was launched upon his public career. This was as we had expected; we knew that some of the attending scientists, as well as the newspaper editor, were certain to prepare reports for the press. Nor did any of them appear anxious to waste time; within twenty-four hours, the nation was taken by storm by the announcement that a traveler had descended upon us from another century!

It will be recalled what a gasp of universal surprise, not to say incredulity, this bit of news produced; how men turned to one another with doubtful stares and eager questionings; how some loudly acclaimed the tidings, while others received them scornfully or suspiciously or denied the possibility of the alleged events. "What! a man from the twenty-third century!" raged an editorial in one of our leading papers. "Surely, human gullibility must have no limits if claims so patently preposterous are to be accepted seriously. The next thing we know, we will be holding receptions for the proverbial man from Mars, if not for a visitor from the star Vega or Arcturus; or else we will be recovering Alexander the Great or Cleopatra from the dust of the centuries! Fie upon all such silly notions! The unfortunate, the incredible thing about the present claims is not, we regret to say, their own wild extravagance, but the fact that they are sponsored by men in whose scientific judgment the public has come to have confidence—Professor Ellery Howard, Professor Charles Warrington, and others of equal reputation. Surely, it must have taken an unconsciously clever imposter to dupe these eminent scientists!"

Other papers took a milder tone, yet stated their conviction that the supposed event would turn out to be a hoax; still others expressed themselves as in doubt, or refrained from passing judgment. But the prevailing attitude was one of scepticism; and those bold few who unhesitatingly proclaimed that Wormwood had dropped upon us out of another dimension, were either denounced as dupes or cranks or credulous fools or else were accused of deliberate fraud, and consequently became the objects of persecution. I, although I had always prided myself on standing high in the esteem of the community, could not fail to note a changed attitude—not only in the way certain of my former acquaintances would now avoid me, but in the slightly deferential manner of others, almost the patronizing air, as though they would say, "Poor old fellow; he used to be pretty clear-headed! Too bad what age has done to his brain!"

In my resentment at the attitude of the ignorant, many of whom, knowing nothing whatever of researches into the Fourth Dimension, denied the very possibility

of its existence, I sought out the man from tomorrow and begged him to demonstrate publicly that he had really arrived from the twenty-third century.

But he was less concerned than I might have expected about establishing his identity. "If the geese won't believe I come from the future," he asked, "does that alter the fact? And if it doesn't alter the fact, are their beliefs of any importance? No doubt the minds of the masses are not fitted to receive the truth; for, as I have observed, this is a rational age—far too rational to see clearly."

"But really, Wormwood, something must be done," I persisted. "This may be a rational age, but it isn't in the least an unbelieving age. A man sits in a booth, and sees and talks with another man miles away—and no one denies that it has happened. Another man enters a boat in the Bay of Naples, and, by means of radio waves, turns on some electric lights in Australia—and, again, no one denies that it has happened. Compared with such marvels, the arrival of a visitor from a future century seems an everyday affair. Yet the world denies that he has come—and how convince it?"

"I'm sorry to say I don't know," returned the man from tomorrow, twiddling his fingers indifferently. "In my age, the opinions of fools are not regarded as of sufficient importance to engage the attention of wise men. What do you expect me to do? Paralyze all the investigators? I wouldn't mind trying with a few of the more sceptical; but the paralyzing rays, you see, would give out in time——"

"Surely, Wormwood, you can do something by means of your superior knowledge!" I interrupted. "See here—this thought occurs to me. Maybe you can look upon what is the past to your age but the future to ours, and recall some important historical occurrences that are about to take place. Then you might publicly predict them. After they had occurred, it would be evident enough you couldn't have drawn upon any ordinary source of knowledge."

"Now that idea isn't half bad," he answered, meditatively. "The trouble is that my historical knowledge of the twentieth century is so limited. Being more concerned with modern history, I devoted only a few months at college to the Neurotic Age. . . . Well, anyhow, let's see. Let's see. The year 1930! When I come to think of it, it seems so far back! What was there important occurring in that year? Any notable event at all?"

Wrinkling his brow into furrows of perplexity, the man from tomorrow sank into silence, and for a moment had nothing to say. "The year 1930," he at length repeated to himself, in a mumbled undertone. "1930. No, I can't remember anything. I can't remember." And he remained absorbed in a brown study, while once more he muttered, "I can't remember. No, no, I can't remember a thing."

Several minutes passed, and I had almost given up hope—when all at once his face brightened and he exclaimed, "Ah! now I have it! It comes upon me like a flash!—just what we were taught in college! 1930 was memorable for two things! Yes, I'm sure it was 1930, and not 2030. Sometime in that year there was a riot in Kadore, India! And there was a volcanic eruption somewhere in the South Seas—in the Mandala Islands, I believe. Both of these events were of far-reaching consequences—otherwise, I wouldn't have recalled them."

"Good! Good!" I cried, enthusiastically, almost as though I saw cause for rejoicing in riots and volcanic eruptions. "The very thing, Wormwood! You're perfectly certain of your dates, are you?"

"Yes, I'm certain enough," testified the man from tomorrow. "But there is just one trouble. I don't remember in what month these things happened. Maybe they have occurred already."

"No, no," I assured him, hastily. "They haven't occurred. But they may happen today or tomorrow. We'd better lose no time! You don't mind my making your prediction public?"

"Well, I don't see what I'm risking," he said, with a disdainful shrug; while I, barely taking time to thank him, rushed to the nearest telephone booth.

A moment later, having been connected with the office of the Daily *Leader*, I requested that a reporter be sent to me immediately.

CHAPTER XVII

The Beginnings of Fame

IN ACCORDANCE with the recommendations of my colleagues and myself, the Endersby Award for Scientific Research for the current year was granted to James Richard Cloud. This Award, far from representing a mere barren honor, carried with it a considerable financial payment—a sum so substantial, indeed, that the inventor was able to repair the losses he had suffered upon the arrival of the man from tomorrow and to resume his investigations into the Fourth Dimension. In many ways, he was much better off than before; he no longer went about in rags; he had removed to a less dingy section of town and had installed himself in a more spacious laboratory; while by degrees he was rebuliding the Dimension Machine and was preparing for new glimpses into the unknown.

"Better watch out, Cloud," I suggested one day, when I visited him at his new quarters and found him laboring at the rods and gleaming mirrors of his remade machine. "I'd advise you to make your invention accident-proof. You see what one mischance has done—and what if there were to be another? I dread to think of the possibility that a man from the twenty-eighth century——"

"Never fear! Never fear!" he cut me short, while he bent own to screw a steel bar into place. "Accidents like that don't happen twice. Besides, I'm equipping the machine with a safety shutter preventing deposits from other ages. And I'm adding a few other interesting attachments. Can you guess what I'm working toward?"

"How should I guess?" I inquired, with a shrug.

He looked up at me, his blue eyes a-glitter with a fiery eagerness.

"I'm trying to invent a Dimension Bridge!" he announced, and then returned to his screw and rod. "I want to make it possible for a man to step out across the void to another dimension. Of course, there are technical difficulties in the way. It's important, for example, to have a Direction Gauge, so that one will know just where one will arrive."

"Yes, but what is the use?" I asked. "Who wants to step out upon another dimension?"

"Oh, no one has to unless he wishes," returned Cloud, pausing to reach into the tool box for a pair of pliers. "It's like aviation—the timid are not compelled by law to take a chance. But I imagine it would be an exhilirating sport to go gliding for a while through the seventh century—or the thirty-seventh! Don't believe, either, that I'm not near to success—another month or two may be all I need. The great obstacle is in the perfection of the Recall Coils; for, after one has left this dimension, it might be annoying not to be able to return. . . . Well, before long I'll probably figure something out. I'm not worrying about it."

"Better not," I advised; for, from the severe, thoughtful manner in which Cloud wrinkled up his brow, it seemed to me that he was anything but unworried.

Not heeding me, he continued energetically to turn his screws and wield his pliers. Probably he was as far as I from realizing what a vast and sinister importance his invention was one day to have!

While Cloud was occupied with his ambitious projects, the man from tomorrow was advancing by leaps and jumps toward fame and fortune. At my solicitation, the newsapers had circulated his predictions concerning the riot in Kadore, India, and the volcanic eruption in the Mandala Islands. The forecasts were regarded as of such news-value, that they were published not in one paper but in many; indeed, there was scarcely a journal throughout the country that did not announce and comment upon them. It was generally agreed that, if the prophesized events actually were to occur, the claims of Wormwood as to his origin would be verified; but, with almost equal unanimity, it was assumed that the events would not occur. "Pooh!" exclaimed one of the editorials that I chanced to read. "Are we back in the days of witches and fortune-tellers? Are we to believe that unborn moments can be read like an open book? The very questions make one shudder for the intelligence of the age. One fears that a back-wash of Medieval superstition has overtaken us. . . ."

I must confess that, in the face of such attacks, I trembled just a little. What if the man from tomorrow had been confused about his dates? What if the occurrences he had foretold were not to take place until 1950 or 1960? Was it wise to have staked all on a single throw? Could we not have foreseen that, if his memory had misled him, he would be utterly discredited and the facts of his origin would never be believed?

But I might have spared my worries. It was only a week before, with triumphant suddenness, the first of Wormwood's predictions was vindicated. One morning the newspapers told in headlines of an insurrection in the remote village of Kadore in India, where the British troops had been opposed by the sympathizers of Gandhi, and several hundred persons had been killed in an affray that seemed likely to kindle all India. . . .

"Wormwood, you are redeemed! You are saved! Now every one will believe in you!" I cried, as I rushed to the Faculty Club with the paper containing the news of the outbreak. "See! Everything is as you predicted! No one will any longer be able to doubt your story!"

The man from tomorrow took up the paper without enthusiasm and let his eyes range along the columns.

"Yes, I knew it would all happen," he declared. "It was inevitable. You can't change the past. But that doesn't mean that people won't challenge my story. It's evident that you don't know the extent of human incredulity, which is as childishly unreasoning as credulity itself, and a thousand times more stubborn."

I fear that I showed my own incredulity by the unbelieving smile with which I heard these words. Yet Wormwood's remarks, as I was surprised to learn, were by no means unjustified. While some commentators were impressed, and while numbers of previously neutral critics were swept into acceptance of our claims, still the more determined doubters continued to doubt as resolutely as ever. "What has our supposed visitor from the future proved?" demanded the New York *Star*, a typical spokesman of the dissenting opinion. "One would have to be addle-headed to be convinced by so flimsy and spurious a demonstration. To begin with, how is one to know that mere coincidence will not explain the event in India, which Mr. Wormwood apparently foretold? Yet one is not even forced to take refuge in this simple and plausible explanation. There is another way of accounting for the facts; and a way which, in our view, is even more difficult to assail. The origin of Mr. Wormwood is admittedly unknown, while certain observers report that he has a cast of countenance not inconsistent with the view that he hails from the Far East. May he not, therefore, be a Hindoo political exile in disguise? And may his foreknowledge of the impending riot not have been due to the fact that he was in touch with the conspirators? To our way of thinking, this is a much saner explanation than that he has sprung, wizard-like, from some remote century."

This editorial, which was frequently copied and commended, was believed by many persons to have disposed of the problem of the man from tomorrow! The sponsors of the *Star's* point of view, who no doubt imagined themselves to be hard-headed reasoning men, were willing to accept the theory of Wormwood's Eastern origin without inquiry, and without troubling about the detail of proof. It was therefore unfortunate for their complacency that they were due to be disillusioned—for all at once there occurrd an event which shook and shattered their whole delicately spun web of belief.

Only a week or two after the Indian riot, disquieting reports commenced to issue from the Mandala Islands. The great crater of Krauriporo, which had been silent for more than a century, began to show signs of activity; there were earth tremors of rapidly growing intensity; there were clouds of smoke and fire above the peak; there were rumblings from within the mountain, and violent electrical displays about the summit. "Surely, it is but a momentary outbreak," reported the astonished commentators. "After a little while, the flames will die down; the tremors will subside; there will be no real eruption."

Almost before the ink had dried upon these predictions, there came that terrific manifestation which startled and horrified the world. The slumbering genii of the lava awoke with cataclysmic violence; the crest of the crater blew into the sea with an explosion that could be heard for hundreds of miles—and suddenly the fairest of the Mandala Islands had been blackened and depopulated.

Let me not enter into the details of the disaster, which from the point of view of our story, is of importance only in so far as it confirmed Wormwood's prophecy. Was not the victory ours at last? I wondered, with a vague, triumphant thrill. How would the doubters explain the facts? Certainly, they would not claim that Wormwood had conspired to make the volcano erupt!

But my optimism merely showed how limited was my imagination. Those who had determined to remain unconvinced were still unconvinced! In particular, many of our so-called intellectuals prided themselves upon the logic of their dissent, and upon their discovery of flaws in the proof. "After all, has anything really extraordinary occurred?" remarked one of our leading journals of opinion. "Once more the explanation of coincidence is not to be discarded; but there is another solution that seems even more adequately to meet the facts. Preceding each volcanic eruption, there are probably long-continued disturbances within the earth—disturbances which could be measured and even located with definiteness if one had seismograph instruments of sufficient sensitiveness. It is true that no instruments of such sensitiveness are now known; but their existence is not inconceivable; indeed, we hold it more than likely that Mr. Wormwood has devised such a machine, and, with its aid, was able to prognosticate the approaching event in the Mandala Islands. It will be noted that he did not foretell the exact date of the occurrence, nor the particular island that was to witness the eruption; and these facts, we submit, are to be taken in confirmation of our theory. We regret to say that Mr. Wormwood is apparently wasting his talents; one with his incomparable powers of pretense should turn not to science, but to politics."

This opinion, of course, was an extreme one; fortunately, it did not find any general reflection except in the upper or reasoning circles of society. While the incredulity of the professional thinking men continued unabated, those individuals who had no reputation for intelligence to forfeit were now almost universally convinced that Wormwood was no less than what he claimed to be. Let the erudite journals scoff as they would! let the lips of savants twist in ironic denial, let sophisticated writers spill their ink in ridicule and scorn!—let pedants rant, and religious authorities rave and fume, claiming that the arrival of a man from another century would undermine the sanctity of the Church!—their plaints were mere foam against the great waters of popular belief that were rolling in, and rolling in, and daily gathering force and volume. Newspapers began to print long articles about the man from tomorrow; magazines began to describe him, or to record the experiences of those who had seen him; the radio began to vibrate with accounts of his appearance and manners; callers began to shower upon him by the scores and the hundreds, until his life was made miserable dodging them, and he saw only those whom he could not avoid.

Now all at once astonishing offers were deluging him, delivered in person and by the mail—offers that he appear in vaudeville, offers that he speak over the radio, offers that he address fashionable societies and clubs, offers that he be seen in the talking pictures! Almost over night he had become a celebrity, a public curiosity; he was to be as well known as any star of the diamond or heroine of the screen! Hence it seemed to be thought that he had no rôle in life except to offer amusement, notoriety or profit to those who thronged to inspect or exploit him.

It would be futile if not impossible to attempt to describe all the curious adventures that befell the man from tomorrow during those throbbing days, and his still more curious reactions to the ideas and proposals of his visitors. There was so much that was noteworthy in Wormwood's conduct that whole chapters would not exhaust the subject; and I would accordingly feel it a great loss to pass on without mentioning at least one or two of his experiences.

In the beginning—and, indeed, throughout his entire public career—he was frequently sought by newspaper reporters. I had the good fortune to witness one of his encounters with the representatives of the press; an encounter that occurred during the early days of his notoriety, before he had learned to bar his doors whenever an enterprising young journalist appeared, and to let it be known that he was "indefinitely absent." On this occasion, Wormwood received his visitor willingly and graciously enough, and went so far as to consent to have his picture taken. When I arrived, the photorapher was just leaving with a satisfied grin; while the reporter, seated opposite Wormwood with pad and pencil, was beginning a questionnaire.

"Mind waiting a few minutes?" Wormwood nodded to me; and I, not being in a great hurry, sat down to observe the course of events.

"Now what our readers want is a good human-interest story," said the reporter, a keen-eyed, cynical-faced man of about thirty-five, whose manner of speech reminded me of a machine-gun. "They would like to know any interesting little facts about you and your manner of life. They want to get down to the real facts. They want to know what you are like as a man. . . . Cigarette, Mr. Wormwood?"

The reporter snapped open his cigarette-case; but Wormwood recoiled as though a live snake had been offered him.

"Ah, I see that you don't care much about cigarettes," the interviewer rattled on. "Prefer cigars? No? Or a pipe? Perhaps I'd better draw a picture of you coiled up with a pipe——"

"What's a pipe?" demanded Wormwood.

The reporter stared. "Don't even know what a pipe is? This will make a first-rate story! Pristine ignorance of the twenty-third century! Now, Mr. Wormwood, maybe you can tell me what's your favorite hobby? . . . What beverage do you prefer? . . . What do you eat for breakfast? . . . Do you indulge in any sports or pastimes? . . . How much exercise do you take?"

Beneath this storm of inquiries, Wormwood had suddenly turned flaming red. His fists began to clench; he arose with unexpected violence; his words came forth in an irate torrent. "See here, sir, do you think I am still in my Adolescent Epoch? Do you imagine that the only interesting thing about me is what I eat and drink? What purpose have you in coming here to insult me with all this petty chatter?"

"But it isn't petty chatter, sir," protested the interviewer. "Why, if you knew anything of modern papers, you'd realize that all this is of the very blood and sinew of journalism—the sort of thing everybody wants to know about—the sort of thing we can feature——"

The man from tomorrow impatiently covered the distance from door to window, and back again from window to door. "Well, that only goes to confirm what I've been suspecting all along," he mumbled. "In the twentieth century, the Adolescent Epoch seems to last for life."

"At least," ventured the reporter, veering to a new line of approach, "maybe you can answer a few very simple queries. Do you require eight hours of sleep, or can you get along with six? . . . Do you prefer tea to coffee? . . . Do you bathe daily? . . . Do you indulge in alcoholic stimulants? . . . Do you——"

"See here," interrupted Wormwood, his clenched fists upraised as though ready to do violence upon the person of his interviewer, "aren't you forgetting yourself? Are you a journalist, or are you a doctor?"

The reporter winced, and retreated for safety to the further corner of the room; while impetuously the man from tomorrow continued, "Of all the infernal impudence! To inquire into the private details of my life! What busines is that of yours? Or of the public? What difference can it make which of your vile brews I prefer to drink, or how much of this hysterical age I sleep away? In my own times, only one's physician would dare to ask such questions!"

"No offense meant, Mr. Wormwood. No offense meant at all," apologized the interviewer.

He paused, as if at a loss for words; then, with a determined expression, glided back to his chair, and continued:

"Now surely, Mr. Wormwood, you don't want to be unreasonable. You don't mind letting me know a few of your opinions on general questions—nothing personal this time—nothing personal at all, I assure you. What, for example, is your view as to the Eighteenth Amendment?"

"The Eighteenth Amendment?" repeated the man from tomorrow, slowly. "The Eighteenth Amendment? Just which amendment was that? The one prohibiting slavery? No, possibly the one abolishing tariffs? Or forbidding armies and navies? I'm really not well up on Constitutional history—you see, there are one hundred and fourteen amendments in my own times——"

The reporter mentioned that the Eighteenth Amendment had to do with the liquor question.

At this information, Wormwood looked puzzled. "I really can't remember that there ever was such an Amendment," he declared. "What can the liquor question have to do with the law? Now in my own day, the most popular drink is Nectojuice, which is made

from unfermented fruits and water. Here and there, other beverages do survive from the Neurotic Age; one still occasionally finds a pathological case of alcoholic poisoning, which is dealt with, of course, by the hospitals for the insane."

The interviewer recorded this information; then, with lightning rapidity, flung his next questions:

"What is your view of woman's suffrage? . . . Have you any ideas regarding Cubism in art? . . . Do you approve of freedom in sex relations? . . . Is it your opinion that the modern home is breaking up? What have you to say on the unemployment situation? . . . and on prison reform? . . . Do you think the stock market is likely to improve?"

As these questions were hurled at him, Wormwood's face was contorted by turns with surprise, disgust and perplexity; while the angry light was flashing back to his eyes.

"Sir," he exclaimed, "you are asking the ridiculous! I refuse to answer your questions! What do you suppose I am? A walking encyclopedia? How am I to be intelligently informed on such a wide variety of themes? Why do you not go to specialists?"

The reporter looked just a trifle annoyed. None the less, he attempted calmly to explain:

"You miss the point of this interview, Mr. Wormwood. I am not looking for expert opinions on any subject. I am merely looking for your opinion. Our readers will want to know what you think about these various things. That will be what will give the article its value——"

"Why, in the name of all things reasonable," thundered Wormwood, "will opinions based on ignorance be valuable? Do you want me to parade my misinformation? By the constellation of Orion! you must take me for an idiot! There is only one field I will be questioned on! That is my specialty, Physical Research! I will not sputter for the amusement of fools!"

"But, Mr. Wormwood, don't you see," protested the reporter, desperately, "people are not interested in your specialty. They are interested only in what you think upon living, breathing topics—why girls leave home, the length of the new Paris skirts, the prospects that the Tigers will pull down the pennant this year and all that sort of thing."

"Well, I don't care what animals will pull down the pennant!" raged the man from tomorrow. "I have heard enough from you, sir! Your trivialities have outraged me sufficiently! Now get out! Get out before I have you thrown out! And when you get back to the imbecile paper which you represent, tell them that if ever they send another——"

"Oh, very well, sir, very well," conceded the reporter, hurriedly slipping his notebook into his pocket. "You don't need to get so testy about it. I'm merely doing what I'm required to do—and it's nothing out of the way. You ought to hear the questions I ask some men. I'd advise you, sir, if you want to see the interview in print, to look in Sunday's paper —"

"What, you're not going to print the interview, are you?" growled the man from tomorrow, as he started threateningly toward his foe. But the reporter, with a muttered oath, had already squeezed through the doorway and made his escape.

CHAPTER XVIII

Further Fruits of Renown

ON THE following Sunday morning, as I was preparing to enter the breakfast room, I was told that a visitor was waiting to see me. Surprised that I should have a caller at such an early hour, I hastened into the sitting-room—and there, impatiently pacing the floor, I observed the man from tomorrow.

Scarcely taking time to greet me, he thrust into my hand a newspaper he had been firmly clutching.

"See! Just look at this!" he stormed. "See what they've done to me! The thieves! The scandalmongers! I'll sue them! They want to ruin me! They want to kill my reputation! They should be prohibited by law——"

While Wormwood's wordy tempest went on and on, I took the paper from his hand. It was a copy of one of our most reputable journals, the *Sunday Universe*. Prominently placed on the front page of the "Special Feature Section," there was an article headed, "Man from Twenty-Third Century Finds Present-Day Manners Queer: Gives Exclusive Interview to *Universe* Reporter." And, beneath this heading, there was a photograph two columns wide of a man whose features seemed vaguely familiar to me, although, I must confess, I would not have been able to identify him had it not been for the caption.

"Tell me now, does that look like me?" demanded the man from tomorrow, pointing to the flat blur of the photographed face. "Do you see any resemblance at all? Look at those small expressionless eyes! Look at that dough-like lump of a head! Actually, do I look anything like that at all?"

"Well, yes, I think I can notice some slight resemblance," testified Mrs. Howard, who had entered the room to shake hands with our visitor.

The man from tomorrow cast her a look that was like a sword-thrust; then suavely observed, "Really, my lady, you are to be congratulated upon your imagination."

Although I regarded this remark as not exactly in order, it required careful scrutiny to convince me that some one else's photograph had not been substituted for Wormwood's.

"What do you think? This libel of a picture is not even the worst!" sighed the man from tomorrow, after Mrs. Howard had left the room. "It's nothing at all by comparison with what follows! Just you read it, and tell me if I haven't grounds for action! You heard what I said to that reporter. Now see what he has put into print!"

Without another word, I turned to the paper and read aloud

"Evidently styles in men will change before the twenty-third century, if John Wormwood, the only known visitor from the future, is to be taken as a fair average sample of his times. A weakened little man of puny physique, with features more badly twisted than those of a professional pugilist, he has reminded more than one visitor of some strange species of monkey from the Brazilian jungles. Yet the grotesqueness of his features is atoned for by the brilliance of his mind and the amiability of his disposition. The *Universe* reporter, calling upon him at his quarters at the Faculty Club of Gotham University, was received most cordially and passed a pleasant hour chatting and listening to his opinions, which he was most voluble in offering.

" 'The manners of your present age,' he began, as he sat puffing away at a cigarette——' "

"Now right there is where I object!" broke in the man from tomorrow, indignantly. "Maybe my looks are as bad as the paper says—though I'll never believe it—but I'll leave it to you, have I ever yet puffed away at one of those obnoxious little smoking stems?"

"Not so far as I know," I acknowledged. "But you shouldn't take what the paper says too seriously, Wormwood. After all, no one will hold it against you."

Having offered this admonition, I continued reading aloud:

" 'The manners of the present age,' he began . . . . 'impress me as so queer that I can never get used to

"What's the matter Wormwood?" I gasped, while my eyes were glued upon this surprising spectacle. "Don't you intend to read your mail?"
"Oh, yes, I intend to read it—when I get time," he declared, with a yawn.

them. Take, for example, the styles in women's clothes. In my own age, all women wear hats a yard wide, and skirts down to their ankles. Or take the matter of food. For breakfast, in the twenty-third century, I always ate a beefsteak or roast pork——"

"Now just listen to that, will you!" fumed my visitor as he again paced the floor, while his hands nervously clasped and unclasped. "Would I ever say anything like that? All men and women in my age were dressed just as I was when I came here! And no one ate beefsteak! We had passed the cannibal stage! Oh, I tell you, it is ungodly!"

"Come, come," was my admonition, "no one nowadays will think less of you for eating beefsteaks!"

Then, passing down the column, I read:

"Mr. Wormwood was especially garrulous in stating his opinions on current events. After expressing his gratification at being heard in such an outstanding organ as the *Universe*, he declared himself in favor of the Eighteenth Amendment, and denied that it would ever be modified or repealed. He spoke approvingly of the policies of the Hoover administration, and said that he thought our country had entered an era of prosperity justifying a lower income tax. Regarding the baseball prospects for the season, he said that he doubted whether the Tigers could again win the World's Championship. He also had many enlightening comments to make on the topic of world peace, the latest Supreme Court appointee, and the situation in China——"

"By all the stars in heaven, don't read any more!" broke in the man from tomorrow, snatching the paper from my grasp and crumbling it. "I can't bear it! I simply can't bear it! The unspeakable rascal! To invent such lies! Oh, I wish I could have had that reporter with me again—just for one minute! I'd paralyze him so that he wouldn't be seen for a month!"

"And what would that gain for you?" I muttered. . . . "Well, what are you going to do about it?"

"What am I going to do? I'll write to the editor! I'll tell him his reporter is a scoundrel and a fraud! I'll demand a public retraction! He has insulted not only me, but the whole twenty-third century! I shall insist on his printing the truth—all the truth, and nothing but the truth! I'll write to the editor this very minute!"

Still in a frenzy, the man from tomorrow asked whether I had any writing materials handy; and, upon being supplied with ink and paper, sat down to pen his letter. He did not inform me precisely what he wrote; but I know that the task absorbed him for more than two hours, and that sheet after sheet was filled with his heavy scrawl. "No need to read this to you now," he said, when finally he displayed the thick envelope that embodied the fruits of his labors. "You'll see it when it appears in print. . . . Do you suppose I'd better send it by Special Delivery?"

The following morning, and the morning after that, and for many mornings thenceforth, I glanced with anxious scrutiny into the correspondence columns of the *Universe*. But alas! the letter must have been misaddressed, or perhaps the editor had more important material to print; for although I never missed a day and am sure that I could not have overlooked the article, I saw no communication above the signature of John Wormwood.

Fortunately, there were so many other things to occupy the attention of the man from tomorrow that he was soon able to forget his grievance against the *Universe*. His correspondence alone was enough to engage him for hours a day; indeed, it was becoming a problem to open and read, even without answering, the multitudinous letters that came to his door. Now that he was famous, he was being showered with the after-fruits of fame; and admirers and detractors and importunate individuals of every guild and species were addressing themselves to him at a great waste of stationery and stamps. It is impossible to estimate his daily average in letters and advertisements, but I believe it could not have been much greater had he conducted a mail-order house. At all events, I know how surprised I was one day when, paying him an unexpected call, I saw a veritable mountain of unopened envelopes in one corner of the room, rising imposingly almost to the height of the table.

"What's the matter, Wormwood?" I gasped, while my eyes were glued upon this surprising spectacle. "Don't you intend to read your mail?"

"Oh, yes, I intend to read it—when I get time," he declared, with a yawn. "But it's been coming in so fast I can't keep up with it. I ought to have an automatic mail sifter and examiner. If most of it's of the same low quality as I've seen already, it's a shame to waste time and eyesight upon it."

"Why, what's wrong with it?" I demanded.

"What's wrong? Just pick up a few of these at random, and read them—you'll soon find out! Go on! Don't hesitate!" he urged, as he snatched a handful of letters and thrust them at me. "I don't mind! There's nothing private about them, anyhow!"

Prompted by a rising curiosity, I tore open one of the envelopes, and read:

"Mr. John Wormwood: Dear Sir: Let us congratulate you on your brilliant predictions, whereby you foretold the Indian riot and the Mandala eruption. Since only one with an astrological training could attain such results, it is clear that you are deeply versed in the reading of the stars. We therefore take pleasure in forwarding you an invitation to join the International Association of Astrology ——"

"International Association of Astrology!" groaned Wormwood. "Astrology, did you say? What an insult! Does any one in the twentieth century still have faith in such superstition?"

Reluctantly I was forced to confess that some unscientific persons did retain such a faith.

"Impossible!" he muttered. "It's like believing in witches and sorcery! . . . Well, Professor, read on!"

I slit open a second envelope, and read the following, which was written in pencil in a sprawling, uncultivated hand:

"Dear Sir: Since you are such a wonderful fortune-teller, maybe you can help me out. My uncle Jim left on a sea voyage seventeen years ago, and said he wouldn't come back without making his fortune. My mother and me has been waiting ever since, but still haven't heard from him. We have tried lots of other palm-readers and fortune-tellers, but one said he was dead, and another said he was busy making a million in Africa. May be sir you could please tell me which is right and greatly oblige. Yours truly——"

"Aladdin and his genii come back to earth!" laughed Wormwood. "That's about the fiftieth of the same kind! They must think I'm a magician! Seem to believe I can do anything from locating a pet cat to directing them to their true love!"

"Now let's see what a third one has to say," I suggested, finding the letters more interesting than I had expected.

This time I selected a neatly typed envelope purporting to be from the "Distinguished Americans Publishing Company." The contents, immaculately embodied on imposingly printed paper, were as follows:

"Dear Mr. Wormwood: Your name has been recommended to us for inclusion in our forthcoming issue of 'One Thousand Distinguished Americans,' which is due shortly to be off the press. We should be pleased to receive from you a biography of not more than one hundred words, recording the outstanding facts of

your life. A printed form to guide you is enclosed. For this service we ordinarily require the nominal fee of twenty-five dollars, which will entitle you to two copies of the volume. Additional copies may be obtained at a reduction of ten per cent below the catalogue price.

"The accompanying circular contains testimonials from leading clergymen, authors, stage stars, theatrical producers, educators, and football champions. Trusting that we shall have the pleasure of including your name, we remain, etc."

"Well, Wormwood, there's an opportunity for you!" I remarked, drily. "Let me congratulate you! You're now one of our thousand most distinguished citizens!"

"Not unless I pay the fee!" he snapped. "And that leaves me out! Want to read some more of the letters?"

Obedient to this invitation, I ripped open a few more envelopes and let my eyes race along the contents. I shall not weary the reader by mentioning the results in detail; but it is only fair to say that most of them maintained the same standard as those already perused. There was an invitation for Wormwood to take a correspondence course in astrology; there was a letter from an amorous young lady, who professed herself greatly taken with his photograph, and requested an appointment; there was a vigorous protest from the Secretary of the Anti-Dry League, deploring his stand on the Eighteenth Amendment; there was a letter from an enterprising business college, which evidently believing that he spoke a foreign tongue, promised to teach him English in fifteen lessons; there was an appeal for funds for the Foreign Mission Society, and three requests for his autograph from admiring ladies; there was a threat from an anonymous party, who demanded a payment of one thousand dollars under penalty of exposing him; there was an invitation to lecture at a prominent Church on "Why I Favor Prohibition," and a letter from the local Republican Club commending him for his endorsement of the Hoover policies and suggesting that he join that organization. These, together with several "confidential" offers by Real Estate companies and some advertisements of rugs, radios, and Skub's "Fine Meat Products," were all that I had any desire to glance through.

It would be needless to describe how the man from tomorrow sneered at each of the letters in turn, and how he refused to answer any of them, stating that "their unwarrantable vulgarity did not justify any response." Annoying as many of the letters were, they were less irritating than some of the offers made him in person—a fact which I had the opportunity to verify two or three days later, when I again paid Wormwood a call. And before I had reached his room on this occasion, I surmised that something was wrong. As I passed along the corridor, I was startled by the sound of voices raised in loud disputation; while clearly over all when I was about to rap at my friend's door, I heard his well known tones shrilling in anger, "Get out now! Get out quick! Wait another moment, and I'll—I'll paralyze you!"

Realizing that I was barely in time to rescue some unwary victim, I did not hesitate for a second. Flinging open the door without formality, I found myself face to face with a red-cheeked Wormwood—and with a tall, insolent-eyed individual, who looked as if he could have crushed the man from tomorrow at a blow.

As I burst into the room, Wormwood was just snapping out the little pistol-like instrument containing the paralyzing rays. Another second, and there would have come the droning sound and the greenish flash—and the smitten man would have toppled to the floor.

At the risk of being paralyzed myself, I thrust myself between the man from tomorrow and his foe. "Go!" I commanded the imperiled one. "Go! Better be quick!"

"Just let me at him! I'll paralyze him!" snarled Wormwood, as he tried to force his way to his adversary.

The stranger, taking the hint, was already gliding toward the half-open door.

"Keep us in mind, Mr. Wormwood! Any time you're still interested, that offer remains good!" he flung out—and then, warned by the sudden elevation of the pistol-like machine, he darted into the corridor and disappeared.

"The rogue! The scoundrel! Why did I let him escape?" muttered the man from tomorrow, with a regretful look; while, with clenched fists, he distractedly paced the floor. "Oh! The infernal schemer! Any one who plies his trade deserves to be paralyzed!"

"What trade is that?" I demanded. "What is he, a counterfeiter? A gangster? He didn't try to blackmail you, did he? Or to offer you a bribe?"

"Yes, that was just it!" raged the man from tomorrow. "He offered me a bribe! And what a bribe! He must have thought me without self-respect! Must have thought I was as dishonest as he!"

I seated myself quietly on the couch, and waited for Wormwood to continue.

But it was several minutes before, growing more calm, he came to me, and, still standing, continued, "What do you think he wanted me to do? What, except to sign my name to a damnable lie? To take money for falsifying myself—for falsifying my century! To let him have my photograph and use it—where do you suppose?"

"How should I know?"

"In the lowest place you could imagine! The subway! An advertisement in the subway! Why, at the very mention of that hole I wanted to paralyze the fellow!"

"Well," I commented, "I don't know that it's a disgrace to be seen in the subway."

"You think not? Then listen to the rest. The schemster had some nice little testimonial to put my name to. Wanted me to say I always smoked a certain brand of cigarette!—I forget which!—named after some animal, llama or dromedary or donkey! I was to swear this is the favorite smoke of the twenty-third century—accounts for all our progress! Can you imagine such impudence? I told him I considered it an insult!"

"Oh, well, after all, Wormwood," I ventured, soothingly, "it's really meant as a compliment. All great men get such offers. How else do you suppose that manufacturers of soap, radios and toilet articles manage to push ahead? Weren't you to receive liberal compensation?"

"Liberal compensation?" echoed the man from tomorrow, with renewed fury. "As if there could be any compensation for having my face seen in subway pictures! No! No! I'd rather starve! Why, if Maranna and my twenty-third century friends could see me there, what do you suppose they'd say? Would I ever be able to lift up my head among them again? No! No, Professor! I may be forced to live in the twentieth century, but I still have some ideals."

With these words, the man from tomorrow snatched at some gaudily printed circulars left on his table by his recent visitor, and vehemently tore them to bits. "No! No! It's impossible!" he reiterated. "I may be forced to live in the twentieth century, but I will not be corrupted utterly!"

Then, after he had flung the ruins into his overflowing waste paper basket, he turned to me a little more calmly, and remarked, "Well, Professor, I suppose I really shouldn't be so angry. Doubtless every age has its ruffians and thieves. . . . Now what was it you came to see me about?"

CHAPTER XIX

An Adventure Looms Ahead

I HAVE already mentioned that the man from tomorrow had been living upon gratuities during his first weeks at the Faculty Club. His needs had been slight; he had demanded little more than board and lodging, along with an occasional penny for such incidentals as newspapers, stamps and car-fares; and, his requirements having been satisfied at the expense of my colleagues and myself, he apparently gave little thought to the problem of providing for himself. Yet it was obvious that he could not continue to subsist forever upon the charity of his friends; and so one day I asked him, as tactfully as I knew how, whether he did not think it time to ponder the question of making a living.

His eyes were wide with surprise as he turned to me, and, without seeming to understand my meaning, bade me repeat the question.

"Don't you think it time to consider making a living?" I asked again.

"Time to consider making a living?" he echoed, uncomprehendingly. "What do you mean? How can a man make a living? If he is alive, he *is* living—why speak of making that which nature has granted him at birth?"

"Evidently," said I, in exasperation, "the idioms of the English language will have undergone a change by the twenty-third century. To make a living means—well, to support one's self."

"Support one's self?" he thrust back at me, with a blanker expression than ever.

In increasing irritation, I perceived that this idiom also would become obsolete.

But finally, by dint of a great waste of words and a still greater waste of patience, I managed to convey my idea. "Certainly, you do not want to be always a burden on your friends," I suggested. "You are now capable of earning money of your own—in fact, a great many money-making offers have come your way. Wouldn't you feel better satisfied and more independent if you accepted one of these proposals?"

For a moment Wormwood sat stroking his chin and regarding me quizzically, like one who manfully struggles with a new idea.

"It is very good of you to point this out," he remarked, slowly. "Very good of you, indeed. I shall not forget your kindness. I am sorry to say I did not quite understand the situation. In my own times, no man considers it a loss of independence to accept of the generosity of friends, for friendship is thought to involve both giving and taking. It is regarded as an insult to reject a friend's hospitality without just cause; hence I should never have thought of refusing anything from you. But now everything is clear; I shall look at once for some remunerative work. There must be something I can do for the benefit of the twentieth century, even though I am paid for it."

I tried to explain that he should forget "the benefit of the twentieth century" in favor of the benefit of his own income. But, though I argued till the mirror opposite proclaimed me to be red in the face, he did not seem able to grasp my idea. "I'm afraid there's bound to be a sacrifice," he ruminated. "The trouble with remunerative work is that it is so often useless. It benefits only one's self; it is apt to be of small advantage to others. It encourages greed and vice; it is a breeder of the ingrowing soul. Ah, well, if I must descend to it I must! Maybe, after all, I can escape the pitfalls and do something worth while!"

"What sort of work do you think you'd prefer?" I asked, abruptly; for I had little patience with his moral rantings.

"That's what I'm wondering," he admitted, as he rubbed and rubbed his bulging forehead in perplexity. "Something connected with Physical Research, I should say; since that's my specialty. However, I'm so far ahead of this age that I don't know what practical good I could do. It would be as if a twentieth century scientist, shipwrecked without tools or appliances on a South Sea island, were to try to teach the aborigines the marvels of electricity."

"I'll tell you what," I suggested, mentioning an idea that had been in my mind for some time, "why don't you do some writing? Didn't you tell me only the other day that you had received offers from magazines?"

"Yes, but how could I take them seriously? Writing isn't my field," he returned, sadly. "I haven't any skill in it. I haven't any training. I haven't any natural aptitude——"

"My dear man," I broke in, irritated at these pointless excuses, "don't let that stop you! Nowadays no writer let's himself be restrained simply for lack of training or natural aptitude. The modern world has risen above such prejudices. Every one knows that some of our most popular writers haven't anything to say, and don't know how to say it."

"Well, that would place me among the leaders," reflected the man from tomorrow . . . "Or no—maybe, after all, it wouldn't. I have something to say. I really haven't expressed my opinions of this age. Whole volumes wouldn't exhaust the subject."

"Good!" I approved. "There's your clue, Wormwood. Now I'd advise you to look over your old correspondence again, and see if you haven't some promising offer."

Reluctantly following this suggestion, Wormwood managed with difficulty to resurrect several recent offers from his piles of read and unread letters; and at length, after much deliberation and considerable prodding on my part, he decided to accept the proposal of that well known magazine, *The World's Affairs*, that he write a series of three short articles on "The Twentieth Century Viewed from the Twenty-Third."

Before I left, accordingly, he sat down to write the editor of *The World's Affairs* a letter of acceptance; while, almost immediately afterwards, he began to pen the first of the articles. His efforts were laborious, for he wrote with scrupulous care; and not being able to adapt himself to the present-day typewriter (which, he said, lacked sundry necessary devices, including a "self-renewing ribbon" and an "error eradicator"), he wrote exclusively in longhand. For several days the Campus saw him not, and he refused all invitations indiscriminately, arising at five in the morning and working steadily until evening. But at last, after a vast expenditure of energy and an enormous waste of paper, he had finished and triumphantly mailed the first of the articles; and in due time the second and the third followed and were acknowledged not only with thanks but with a check.

Before the arrival of the letter item, I observed, the man from tomorrow looked conspicuously happy. Whenever I saw him, he would fling out his chest in a jaunty, self-approving manner, would drink deep of the air, and exclaim, "Ah! Now at last I'm free! I'm free! It's a wonderful thing to be free!" But, immediately upon the appearance of the check, his contentment seemed to leave him. Once more his face took on a strained and worried expression; one would have said at a glance there here was a man with some secret burden on his mind. "What am I to do now, Professor?" he asked. "What am I to do with all my money? They sent me a thousand dollars, you know. It's more than I have any need of. Do you suppose I should give most of it away?"

"Give most of it away?" I demanded. "What can you be thinking of?"

"Well, it's a great responsibility to have so much money," he explained. "I'd feel so much better to be rid of it. Besides, I don't need the money, and maybe some one else does. In my own age, if I didn't give it away, I'd be scorned by respectable people."

"Well, in this age," I pointed out, "you'd be scorned by respectable people if you did give it away. When one has too much money, there are lots of things to do with it. For example, you could buy a motor car——"

Wormwood scowled. "Not if they paid me to take it! Aren't there enough of them already to endanger the public peace and safety? . . ."

"Or you can invest in some personal finery—some fashionable new clothes," I proceeded. "Go dressed in the latest styles——"

With an angry gesture, Wormwood cut me short. "You don't seem to realize, Professor, that this season's styles are three hundred years out of date for me! . . . What else can I do?"

"Or again," I continued, at a loss for ideas, "you might travel. "Of course, you really haven't money enough——"

"Let's see if I haven't!" he caught up, enthusiastically. "Why not travel? That's precisely the thing! What better way of seeing the twentieth century? Thank you very much, Professor! Yes, I'll travel, I'll travel!—that's what I'll do with my money!"

Shaking his own hands as if in self-congratulation, the man from to-morrow did an excited hop, skip and jump about the room. "I'll travel! I'll travel!" he cried, over and over again. "I'll travel! I'll travel! I'll travel!"

"Just one moment there!" I warned, alarmed at his eagerness. "Before you do any planning, you'd better consider your finances. Why, you haven't nearly enough—hardly half enough, for example if you want to go to Europe——"

"Go to Europe?" he challenged. "Europe? What makes you think I'd go there? Not with 1930 methods of transportation! You still haven't instituted transoceanic dirigible travel, have you?"

"Why, no—" I was forced to admit.

"I thought not!" he sighed. "I thought not! That is still decades in the future. And do you think I'd trust myself to one of those jerky little steamboats of yours? Why, I don't believe you have a vessel of more than fifty or sixty thousand tons!"

"No, we haven't—yet," I acknowledged.

"And probably they don't make more than twenty or twenty-five knots!" he continued. "I remember once reading an essagy on the first centuries of steam navigation. It was unbelievable what people had to undergo. Five or six days locked in one of those tossing little tanks! Nothing to do but watch the waters, eat, gossip, and grow seasick! No, thank you, sir! No thank you! When I go traveling, I want to do it for pleasure!"

"Then where, pray do you want to go?"

"Somewhere on land, of course. Almost anywhere on land. Your surface vehicles may be primitive; but at least, one can get out of them when one tires. That's why I'll take a chance. Now all that's left is to decide where to go. Guess I'd better look through the papers. Mind going over them with me, Professor?"

"Not at all," I said, and waited while he fished about in the refuse on the floor to find the "Travel Section" of the previous Sunday's *Leader*. After much vain fumbling amid newspapers and discarded correspondence, he succeeded in locating the desired pages; and together the two of us perused the "Travel Suggestions" and travel advertisements.

Personally, I thought it best for him to take some short and not too costly trip—to Boston, to Atlantic City, or, at most, to Niagara Falls; but he was of a different way of thinking. "If I'm to travel at all," he decided, "I'd better make a thoroughgoing job of it. Might as well get somewhere."

As he uttered these words, his eyes fell upon an advertisement which seemed instantly to fascinate him. "There! The very thing!" he exclaimed. "The very thing I've been looking for!"

Snatching the paper from my grasp, he read, in sonorous tones:

"De Luxe Tour of the Continent. Party limited to forty. Accompanied by professional guide. Niagara Falls, the Great Lakes, Yellowstone, Yosemite, Grand Canyon, Zion National Park. Sip the pure air of the Rockies. Marvel at Redwood groves by the blue Pacific. Stroll amid the orange orchards of the balmy Southland. Seven thousand miles of sheer delight through mountain, forest, prairie, and vine-land. Tour to last forty-two days. All expenses included, only $895. Make reservations without delay, Harry Chef & Co., 1100 Fifth Avenue."

"Well," demanded Wormwood, after reaching the eloquent conclusion of this announcement, "what do you think of it? Sounds like the real thing, doesn't it?"

"Oh, I'm not saying it wouldn't be all right," I admitted, hesitatingly, "That is, if one had the money."

"But you forget!" he protested. "I have the money! I have more than enough!"

"Heavens above, Wormwood," I remonstrated, "you have only a thousand dollars. Certainly, you're not going to spend every penny——"

"Why not?" he demanded. "What's the use of money if you don't spend it? Can't I make more afterwards? Besides, I'll have more than a hundred dollars over."

"But, in a trip like that, one must lay something aside for extras!" I pleaded, desperately.

Without appearing to hear me, he had already turned to his writing desk. "You don't mind, do you, if I take just a minute to drop a line to Chef and Company? . . . I'm so afraid that, if I wait, all their reservations may be taken up."

A moment later, while I folded my hands beside me and paced over to the window, where I reflected upon the strange kinks and freaks of twenty-third century psychology, I could hear the pen of the man from to-morrow as it nervously squeaked and raced across the paper.

CHAPTER XX

The Adventure Arrives

WHEN it became generally known that the man from to-morrow was planning a transcontinental tour, several of us who had been supporting him could hardly suppress our grumblings and murmurs of dissatisfaction. "What! he can accept our offerings, and then can afford an expensive trip!" was the common plaint. "No doubt he doesn't even intend to pay us back!"

"No doubt he doesn't," said I; for it was useless to explain, and impossible to make the disgruntled ones understand Wormwood's lofty ethical code, which forbade him to pay back what he had received. For that matter, I myself had difficulty in understanding it, and only by the exercise of extreme forebearance was I able to tolerate our visitor's eccentricities.

Unconscious of the reproaches being hurled at him in private, the man from to-morrow went blithely ahead with his plans; he secured his place with the Chef touring party; he made arrangements to leave at an early date; and all the while he would discourse volubly on the prospective joys of the journey to those very per-

sons who had secretly been most vigorous in condemning him. With supreme contempt for any opportunity to accumulate mere lucre, he refused the offers of newspapers which would have paid him a considerable sum for his impressions of the trip; he let it be known in no uncertain terms that he was traveling for purposes of pleasure and education and not for profit; while, from the pose of independence which he struck and the extreme self-assertion of his language, one would have been justified in assuming him to be a millionaire's son.

At last the all-important day arrived. Equipped with a suitcase innocent of anything in the way of suits, but containing an abundance of notebooks and note paper in addition to a small camera, Wormwood permitted me to hire a taxicab and accompany him to the railroad terminal. After arriving at the station, with its hurrying throngs, its enormous writing rooms, and its high vaulted ceilings, he became so interested in the sights that he loitered at a snail's pace, with eyes cast speculatively upward, and would probably have missed his train had I not continually goaded him on.

"Queer! How very queer!" he meditated. "Reminds me a little of some of our smaller air-ports, except that people seem so very much more in a hurry. Strange, how hushed everything in the twentieth century appears! The world has never before had so many time-saving devices, yet one would think no one had time enough to do anything. Now in my own century——"

"Come, come," I urged. "Your train leaves at 5.25, and it is now 5——"

At this point we were interrupted by a red-capped porter, who snatched at Wormwood's suitcase and almost succeeded in wresting it out of his grasp. "Great Western Limited, sir?" he inquired.

"Here, what do you mean?" demanded Wormwood, with an angry flush . . . And then, as sudden realization came to him, "Oh, you want to carry my grip? Thanks greatly, but you have the wrong party. I'm strong enough to carry it myself."

While the discomfited porter was retreating, my companion turned to me and inquired, "Tell me, do I look sick or infirm, that he thought I couldn't carry my own grip?"

Unfortunately, I had no chance for explanations; although I saw that the man from to-morrow was sadly in need of instruction regarding certain prerequisites of modern travel. By this time we had arrived at the gateway, where a few hurried stragglers were bidding leave of friends and pressing forward to take the 5.25. And, since the clock informed me that the train would leave in something like two and a half minutes, I was loudly insistent that Wormwood show the gateman his tickets without delay.

Yet, though quivering with excitement, he still seemed in no particular hurry. "Surely, the train won't leave without me!" he said. "I have my reservations, haven't I?"

For another minute he fumbled nervously in his pockets; then, while I foresaw how he would reach the platform just in time to see the train pull out, he put down his grip and wasted another thirty seconds in shaking both my hands vigorously and in assuring me that he would write soon. "Yes, I'll surely write!" he promised. "I'm certain to have worlds of things to tell about."

"Better hurry, if you want to make the train," urged the gateman, for Wormwood was now the last in line.

Whereupon he shot hastily forward, allowed his ticket to be punched, turned back to wave me a final farewell, and was lost in the nether darkness. The last I saw of him, he was taking to his heels—which, I reflected, was probably just as well; for the hand of the clock opposite me was just moving forward to 5.25.

Several days went by while I browsed in the luxuriance of unwonted freedom and ease. Somehow it seemed to me, now that the man from to-morrow had left, that a great weight had been lifted off my mind; for previously I had felt the constant need of counseling and watching over him, the constant fear that he was about to do something reckless or outrageous. . . .

I did, indeed, occasionally wonder how he was faring on his journey; nor had my last few minutes with him encouraged me in the hope that he would make a good traveler. It was therefore not without pleasure that I at length found myself in possession of an envelope addressed in his heavy hand; and it was not without interest that I glanced along the contents, which were peculiarly difficult to read because of the shaky and uncertain writing:

"Honored Professor: It is very, very hard to write, because of the monstrous jerking of the train, which has jarred my nerves until I feel as if I have been through a war.

"I am now leaving Chicago for the 'great wild west' which I see described in the advertisements. What a journey I have had! It is only four days, but it seems like four weeks! I had never thought traveling could be such hard work. In my own times, all long trips are made by air; and so it was naturally somewhat of a novelty to me to enter one of your primitive surface-coaches. I found the interior as commodious-looking as I could have expected, and for an hour or two I was too interested to mind the swaying and lunging. But after a while I began to feel very sick, and thought I could recognize the symptoms of that ancient disease known as seasickness, which is fortunately almost obsolete in the twenty-third century. I will not describe my sensations for the next hour or two, except to say that I wouldn't have minded if the train had run into the river. But late in the evening, somehow, I began to feel better; though I did miss supper, and also missed seeing the scenery. The worst of my sufferings was in the beginning, when I felt too ill to remain up. Then I asked the conductor where to find the sleeping apartments; but he referred me to an officer known as the porter, a colored man who was very courteous, but surprised me by saying, in a strange dialect whose origin I cannot begin to imagine, 'Yes, sah, dis am de sleepin' car.' He then told me I could not go to bed yet since it was not time to put up the berths. Of course, I thought this ridiculous, but he said I had only an upper berth, and the lady sitting across from me had the lower, which she wanted to use to sit in, so that the berth couldn't be put up without her permission. This seemed queer to me; but I was too sick to try to wonder what it all meant. I simply asked the lady if I might have her permission to go to bed—a question she must have misunderstood, for she looked at me with a horrified glare. 'Sir!' she muttered, in such tones that you would have thought I had run a dagger through her. After that, I didn't try any more, but simply rolled up on the seat, feeling miserable and wishing I was back in the twenty-third century.

"Later in the evening, when I was a little better, I began to watch that interesting official, the porter. Everybody, I was surprised to find, seemed to know him, for everybody called him 'George.' He was a most obliging and likable chap, and did lots of helpful little things, such as to dust off the men's clothes and shoes and to bring hat-bags and pillows for the ladies. And so, when I saw him coming down the aisle and doing some heavy work that he called 'making up the berths,' I thought it a shame that no one would do anything for him in return. Sick as I was, I suggested to a man across the aisle that we pitch in and help George, who wasn't a very big fellow and was looking fearfully tired. You ought to have seen the look that man across

the aisle cast me! You would have thought I was suggesting a murder! I knew I must have said something wrong somehow, but I couldn't imagine what. So I went to George myself and asked if I mightn't help him. I believe I never in all my life saw a man look so surprised! 'Now that's all right, Boss,' he said, still speaking his curious dialect. 'Ah thanks yo' very much, but yo' just remember me in de mornin', and Ah'll thank yo' still mo'.' Now what could he have meant by that?

"Well, at last the berths were all fixed up, and George helped me climb up the ladder into bed. I tell you, that was an experience! How Maranna and my own people would laugh at the idea of taking a ladder to bed! Fortunately, I am a small man as twentieth century people go; but, even so, I had to be something of an athlete as I began to undress on my swaying mattress. How I ever managed it I don't know, but I was feeling seasick again by the time I had finished. 'Is this the pleasure trip I am paying to take?' I asked myself. Yet the worst was only just beginning. What a night I passed! I hardly slept a wink. Once, when I did go to sleep, I awoke in terror, when a passing train went by with such a crashing and screeching that I shook in every limb. And, another time, we stopped short with such violence that I thought there had been a wreck and barely restrained myself from crying out at the top of my voice. 'Alas!' I thought. 'What inconvenience the twentieth century traveler must undergo! Never before had I sighed so longingly for the spacious sleeping apartment of our dirigibles, with their vibration-proof pneumo-etheric screens and their radio-atomic silencers, which make them noiseless as one's own home! . . .

"However, let me pass on. The following morning we were at Niagara Falls, and there was a great bustling among the members of our party, who, by the way, seem to be a most dull and seedy group, composed largely of sour-looking old women and flat-looking men approaching the Epoch of Decadence. Somehow I felt sorry to have to say good-bye to George, for whom I had taken a real fancy; but I shook his hands heartily, which seemed greatly to surprise him—and, at the same time, I did not lose the opportunity to say a good word for him, and to wish him the best of success in his future undertakings. However—though I may have been mistaken—it seemed to me that George looked disappointed, and even mumbled a bit beneath his breath. 'Say, Boss, ain't yo' forgot somethin'?' he asked—which was very strange, for I looked through my suitcase carefully, and am sure there was nothing missing. . . .

"Now let me tell you about Niagara Falls. That was a sight almost worth coming to the twentieth century to view! Of course, I have frequently been in the vicinity in my own times—but never have I witnessed such a spectacle. Long before the twenty-third century, the waters of the Great Lakes had been so diverted for industrial purposes and their level consequently lowered that there is only the merest trickle running over the Falls. Strangely enough, you folks of the twentieth century don't appreciate your advantages in having this great natural marvel still with you!

"Well, I guess this is enough for to-day. The train is jerking so badly that I'm beginning to feel seasick again. By to-morrow at this time, they tell me, we will be approaching the Rockies.

"Shake Dr. Horn's hand in greeting for me. And give my salutations to Mrs. Howard—and to the fair Miss Whitcomb. With gracious appreciation of past favors,

"Your Friend from the Future."

Following the receipt of this letter, I did not hear from Wormwood for several weeks; and I was growing just a little anxious on his account before finally I received a heavy envelope bearing the postmark of San Diego. "Evidently Wormwood is having a chequered career!" I reflected; and, upon opening the envelope, I found that I was not mistaken in this surmise:

"Most respected friend: So much has happened since I last wrote that I hardly know where or how to begin. I have had some very enjoyable experiences—and some that were not quite so enjoyable. The thing that has most impressed me is the Western scenery. To be sure, I have often passed through the same territory in my own times—but how different it looks to me now! Although you in the twentieth century have already spoiled much of the natural grandeur of your land, diverting streams and destroying forests, you have not yet ruined it utterly. It is not nearly so bare or barren as in the twenty-third century. The Rockies and the Sierras are not completely bald and treeless; their slopes are not blasted everywhere by the scares of mines; their streams have not dwindled into nothingness, their wild life has not been altogether exterminated. We of the twenty-third century would gladly repair the damage, which was done before our own time—but, alas! it is too late! One might as soon try to give life to a corpse.

"Consequently, it was a real experience—if a rather sad one, for a man who sees into the future—to go traveling across wooded mountains, to drink of the fragrance of pines and redwoods, and to quench one's thirst in cool shady streams undisturbed by the drone of cities. In our own age, unfortunately, the growth of population has blighted many places that were virgin solitudes in yours; I was surprised to pass over some of the sites of coming great cities, and to find nothing at all! Gatesville, with its three million population in my own century, is a mere village of three hundred souls to-day; while the western metropolis of San Ramona, which is to boast more than ten millions, is represented by a sheepherder's home overlooking two wilderness streams! In California, I was particularly impressed at the change wrought by time. How delightful it looks to-day with its mild brown valleys, its curved brown hills, its orchards, its blue bays, its peaceful distances! It seemed to me to be quaint as some remote dream-place; and I groan to think how it will be despoiled and blasted by the growth of population; how, three hundred years from now, its hillsides will be black with its forty-million population, its forests will be devastated, its valleys will reek with factory smoke, its mountain streams will be polluted by industry; while nowhere on the great shoulders of its snowy ranges or in the depth of its tremendous canyons will one find a spot secure from the smoke and the brawling and the disturbing intrusion of man.

"Yes, my friend, this age has indeed some advantages; but my heart grows heavy when I realize how little you appreciate them, and how little you will protect them from the greed and the numbers and the locust-like ravages of your own citizens. . . .

"Picturesque and imposing as your scenery is, however, I was not able to enjoy it fully. This was because, wherever I went, I had to to be attended, like a man with an over-large family, by the forty members of the touring party, who, surely, must have been recruited from persons mentally in the Epoch of Childhood. They only saw what they were told to see; and what they were told to see they always admired. Usually they had but one word to express their approval; and that word was 'Wonderful!' 'Look at that terrific crashing stream!' our guide would say; and two scores of voices would chime in, 'Wonderful!' 'Look at that enormous cliff!' he would remark; and again one would hear that expressive response, 'Wonderful!' 'Observe that field over there!' he would exclaim, point-

ing to a flat stretch of ordinary grass. 'It was there that Andrew Jackson routed Benedict Arnold in the Civil War.' And once more you would hear that same impressive chorus, 'Wonderful!'

"At first I found this sort of thing amusing, but after a while its monotony became too much for sensitive nerves to bear. And so I took to wandering off by myself and avoiding the rest of the party whenever I could. This enabled me to see much more of the country, but it also made me very unpopular. I noticed how queerly my fellow travelers would look at me, and how strangely they would nod and point in my direction. Also, once or twice I overheard some curious phrases, such as 'Nobody home there,' and 'That guy is cracked.' I wonder if you would mind informing me what these expressions mean?

"To make matters worse, my tongue would always be getting the better of me and saying things that should have been left unsaid. 'Now where are the invisible glass factories?' I unthinkingly asked in one town, forgetting that they wouldn't be built for two hundred years yet. And in another town I said, 'This place looks so strange without its floating dirigible hangars!'—which made every one stare at me as though I had gone mad, since floating dirigible hangars are an invention of the twenty-third century. Again, when I was shown any object that my fellow travelers thought very modern, I would be apt to forget and declare that it was an interesting antique; while, as if this were not enough, I couldn't help making an occasional reference to the comforts of my own century. And so I have come to have a singular nickname, which I received on the second day of the trip and have kept ever since: 'The guy that thinks he isn't born yet.' . . .

"Well, Professor, let me turn from all this nonsense and come down to serious things. For I really have something very serious to write you about. In one way, the trip has proved a great disappointment. The advertisement of Harry Chef and Company, I am grieved to say, misrepresented sadly in saying that all expenses were included. Alas! I have been to constant expense on my own account; particularly since, not sharing the cannibalistic fare of my fellow sightseers, I have daily had to buy food and sandwiches and other articles to ward off starvation. I must reluctantly report an unhappy bit of news: the two hundred dollars which I had when I set out, and which seemed a little fortune, has been steadily dwindling. At the present moment I have just two one-dollar bills in my pocket, in addition to a few small coins. I wonder, dear Professor, whether you would not forward me a slight amount? I should never forget your kindness, and should be only too glad to repay you in time if you would accept repayment. Looking over my itinerary, I see that you will be able to reach me at the Palace Hotel at the Grand Canyon.

"I salute you warmly, as ever,

"Your friend,
"John."

"P. S. Since writing the above, I saw a charming little souvenir, which I thought just the thing for Miss Whitcomb. Please advise her that she may expect to receive it any day now. One of the other tourists, from whom I borrowed the money, agrees that it is precisely the gift for a lady."

CHAPTER XXI

The Homecoming

AFTER I had wired Wormwood the money he requested, I assumed that he would leave me in peace for the rest of his trip. But no! I was not to be so fortunate; about two weeks later, I was startled to receive a telegram, "Collect." Tearing open the envelope not without misgivings, I read the following tale of woe:

"Professor Ellery Howard,
46 West 73 St.,
New York City.

"Have missed my train at Chicago. Also missed Chef party, who have tickets. Only forty cents left. Kindly send immediate aid, care Illinois Railroad.

"John Wormwood."

Here, indeed, was a message to make me stamp about the floor and snort violently. I have always prided myself on being a man who controls his temper; but this was one of the occasions on which I lost it utterly. Now all at once I thought I could appreciate the feelings of a father cursed with an errant and incorrigible son—how avoid the responsibility for Wormwood's irresponsible deeds? Had he not already been as much of a drain on my resources as a new motor car, and as trying to my patience as a very old one? Mrs. Howard, when I showed her the telegram, waxed even more indignant than I, and suggested that I "teach Mr. Wormwood a lesson" by leaving him stranded in Chicago. But I, although not without temptations to follow this advice, was tormented by pictures of the man from to-morrow drooping and dying in a strange city. And so, although I grumbled mightily, I wasted no time about seeking the nearest telegraph office and forwarding the necessary funds.

While waiting for Wormwood to complete his journey, it occurred to me to pay another visit to James Richard Cloud, against whom I felt an unreasonable secret grievance. It was Cloud, and not I, I told myself, who was responsible for Wormwood's presence in this generation; accordingly, it should be he and not I that should shoulder the burden. At the least, I wished him to know how much I was suffering at the indirect result of his Dimension Machine; and it was probably with this idea in the background of my mind that I sought him out in the new quarters where he had been installed ever since receiving the Endersby Award.

As usual, I found him at work on the improved model of his invention. At the moment of my arrival, in fact, he was in a particular state of excitement over the discovery of what he termed an "Adjustable Inter-Dimensional Balance"; while, throughout the greater part of my visit, he was busily engaged in testing some instrument that looked like a barometer, but that, instead of "Fair," "Unsettled," and "Stormy," was marked "Super-Spatial Variations," "Dimensional Etheric Pressure," and other things of a similarly incomprehensible nature.

"Well, Professor, I think I'm getting there!" he enthused. "Yes, I really do think I'm getting there! I've got my Dimension Bridge about all ready now. My Dimension Gauge is almost perfected. There are only a few delicate minor balances to complete before I'm ready to venture out into higher space. Do you think you would care to join me, Professor, and have the credit of being one of the first two men——"

"No, thank you," said I, reflecting that I was too old to be seeking honors out of my own dimension.

"Well, at any rate, I want you to know what I've been doing," he continued, as he stepped back a foot or two to regard his Inter-Dimensional Gauge. "I owe that to you—since you were one of the first to appreciate my invention. The machine is already in a condition to test. Thus far, no one except me has seen it in operation, but I'm going to show you now——"

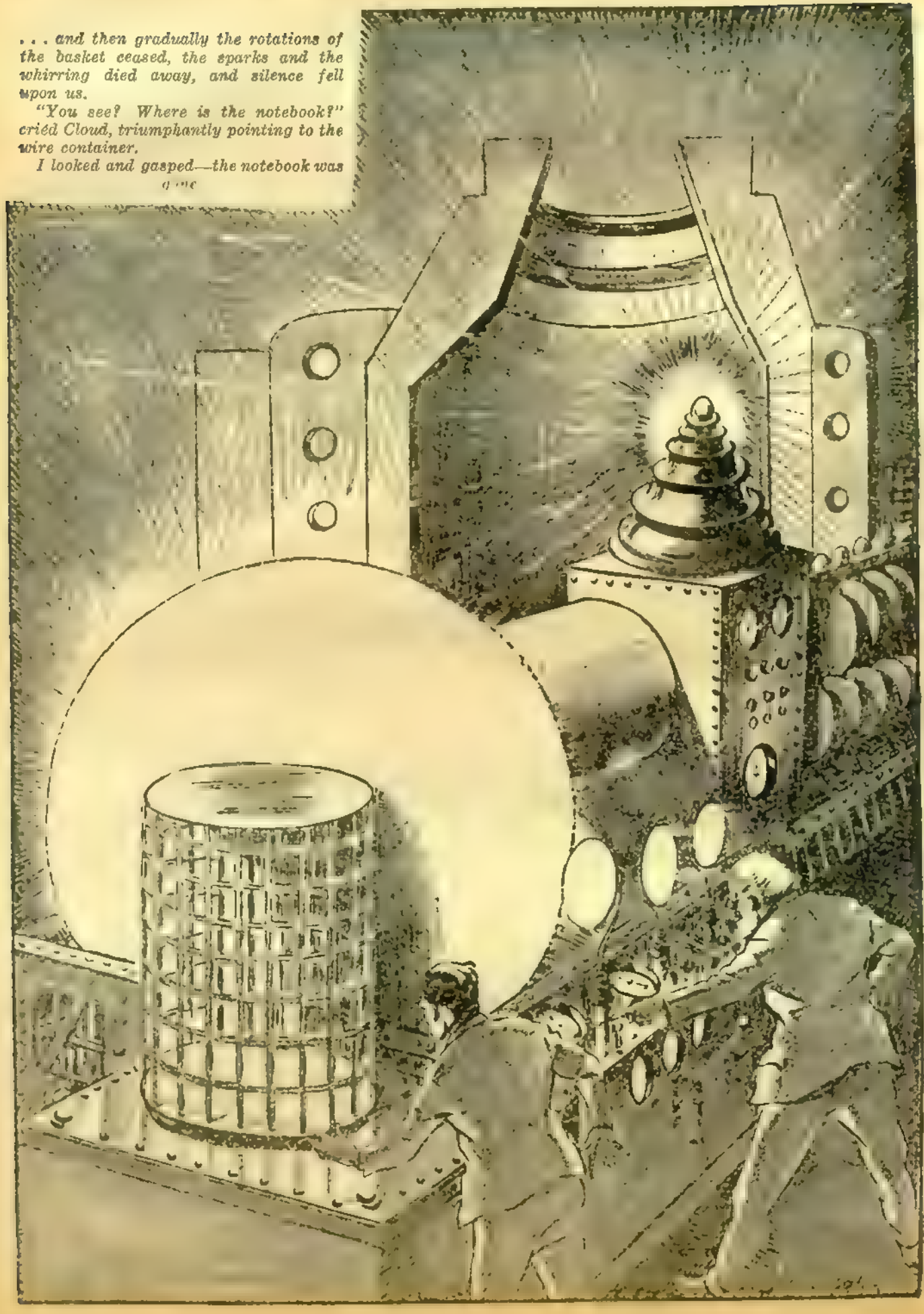
"Not yet, Cloud! Please, not yet!" I protested, raising my hand in alarm. "You'd better stick to this dimension a while longer——"

"Oh, have no fear, Professor!" he laughed. "I'm not going to experiment with myself just now. I won't take

. . . and then gradually the rotations of the basket ceased, the sparks and the whirring died away, and silence fell upon us.

"You see? Where is the notebook?" cried Cloud, triumphantly pointing to the wire container.

I looked and gasped—the notebook was



any chances till everything has been perfectly adjusted. But I want to demonstrate with some small object."

He paused, while I nodded in silent acquiescence, and his keen eyes appraisingly scanned the room. "Let's see—what will we take?" he meditated. "Almost anything will do. Ah, there—the very thing!"

His gaze had fallen upon a little stiff-backed notebook six or eight inches wide. "The very thing!" he repeated, as he snatched up this object with an avid, zealous expression. "Now for the experiment! I hope to be able to convince you, Professor!"

Wondering what on earth he could be contemplating, I watched how he placed the article in a basket-like wire contrivance at one end of the machine—a contrivance similar to that in which Wormwood had been deposited from the Fourth Dimension.

"Now I want you to see that there's no possible chance for this object to escape by ordinary means," the inventor pointed out, as he closed the container in such a way that the notebook seemed to be held secured as a bird in its cage.

"No, there is no apparent chance—except by opening the wire case," I agreed. And Cloud, looking pleased, mumbled something I could not quite make out, and turned to his experiment.

First he pulled a lever, and there occurred that curious movement and manipulation of the mirrors which I had observed in the original Dimension Machine. Then he pulled a second lever, and there came an ominous whirring and sparkling at one end of the instrument, and all at once the wire basket began to rotate with tremendous rapidity. So swiftly did it revolve that all that was visible was a gray blur, which itself seemed to grow eerily thinner and thinner as I watched, until I could see the walls through it as plainly as though there were nothing between. "The dimensional contact is about to be formed!" shouted Cloud, his tones barely audible above the vibrant noises of the machine—when all at once I was startled by a heavy crashing sound accompanied by a dazzling flare, and then gradually the rotations of the basket ceased, the sparks and the whirring died away, and silence fell upon us.

"You see? Where is the notebook?" cried Cloud, triumphantly pointing to the wire container.

I looked, and gasped—the notebook was gone!

"It's somewhere in the Fourth Dimension," the inventor continued. "Hundreds and maybe thousands of years away. But now to get it back."

Then once more he pulled the levers; once more the mirrors twisted and paraded back and forth; once more there was a whirring sound, a clattering and a flashing of lights; once more the wire basket rotated so rapidly that it dwindled to invisibility; once more there came the thunderous crash and the brilliant flare—after which the noises and the movements by degrees ceased, and the instrument became silent as before.

But, in one way, it was not as before. "Look!" exclaimed the inventor, pointing enthusiastically to the basket. And I looked, and to my astonishment, beheld the notebook—apparently undamaged by its passage through time or space!

"What can be done with inanimate objects can be done with living men as well," declared Cloud, stroking his chin in self-congratulation, while his eyes were thin fires of enthusiasm. "As you can observe, I've at last perfected the Recall Coils. You see now why I say that, before long, I'll be able to visit the Fourth Dimension myself?"

"Yes, I see," I admitted. But what I did not see was the practical importance the invention was to have.

A day or two later the man from tomorrow, looking tired and flustered, arrived by a slow train from Chicago. He returned at once to the Faculty Club, where he was reinstalled in his former quarters; and then, without even taking time to free himself from the dust of the journey, he hastened to my home, where he came unannounced and unexpected.

"I just had to see you, Professor!" he exclaimed. "You're my best friend in this century, and so I just had to see you after being away so long . . . Heavens! but I've had a strenuous time of it. It does feel good to be back home again!"

So saying, he stretched his travel-worn form over the full length of a new tapestried sofa, and stared at me out of eyes that brimmed with pleasure, although in the background I seemed to sense unsounded depths of sadness.

"Yes," he said, "that pleasure trip may have been beneficial, but it certainly was hard work! This age doesn't seem to know anything of the real luxury of travel. It thinks that it must take its vacations the way it takes its business deals—in a terrific rush. Heaven forbid that it should have a moment of leisure! The result is that, being unable to assimilate all that it does, it suffers from a sort of sightseers' indigestion—a malady for which no remedy is known to science. To come to think of it, of course, that is just what I should have expected in the Neurotic Age."

"Well, now, Wormwood, suppose you forget all that," I returned, wondering if it were possible for him to pin his mind down to practical questions. "Don't you think you'd better be looking toward the future? You've come back in debt, you know, and the question is what you're to do——"

"Yes, yes, I realize that," he admitted, sadly, as his thin hand disconsolately stroked his uneven chin. "This age, I see, has a prejudice against a man without money. Why, for example, in Chicago, as I was standing on a street corner, not knowing what to do with myself, a policeman accosted me and came near to putting me in handcuffs, when he found I had only a few pennies and nothing to do with my time. As if the way to help a man that's down is to kick him! I saved myself a lot of trouble only after assuring that policeman, that I was waiting for some money and would leave town in a few hours. Otherwise, I might have had to paralyze him—which, I'm afraid, would have been very embarrassing."

"Thank heaven, you spared him!" I muttered, thinking it would have been still more embarrassing had I received a hurry call to Chicago to rescue my friend from a cell.

"So it's clear enough," Wormwood resumed, "I'll have to earn some more dollars now. Isn't money a queer thing?——seems to curse one like a two-edged sword. It's a torment when you haven't got it, and still more of a torment when you have. No wonder insanity was so prevalent in the Neurotic Age! Well, I must resign myself. I suppose I'll attempt some more writing. Maybe *The World's Affairs* would want me to do some new articles."

"Maybe they would," I agreed. "Why not try them?"

Wormwood saw no objection to this idea, and, after a little further urging, promised to write immediately to the editor of *The World's Affairs*.

But there was one problem that still weighed upon his mind. Even after he had arisen to leave, he lingered hesitantly, as though reluctant to go without mentioning a secret.

"Have you seen Miss Whitcomb of late?" he finally asked, almost with the diffidence of a schoolboy. And he stammered slightly as he continued, "I—I have been thinking of her often. Of all the ladies I have met in this century, she is the most charming. She would not seem out of place in the twenty-third century . . . I hope she has received my little souvenir? I have been won-

dering, for she did not acknowledge it. Do you suppose I might try to see her soon? Think she would be home to-night——"

"Miss Whitcomb is away on her vacation," I stated, sternly. "She has gone to Isolation Lake. Dr. Horn is there also. Probably she will not be back for two or three weeks."

"Really? Well, that is too bad," he sighed, with a woe-begone expression. "Then I shall have to wait. Yes, I shall have to wait. There is no other way, I suppose."

Once more I was about to remonstrate with Wormwood on his undue solicitation about the fiancée of another man; but the thought struck me that my words would be wasted. Besides, there was something so genuinely sorrowful about the spectacle of his drooping lips and eyes, that I had not the heart to try to reason with him.

CHAPTER XXII

The Brewing of Disaster

WHEN I look back upon the culminating episode in the twentieth century career of the man from to-morrow, the stream of events seems to have moved so rapidly and strangely that even to-day, although all that happened is a well-known and often repeated story, I am left a little bewildered and incredulous. Had I not been the personal witness of many of the incidents; did I not have the testimony of unimpeachable observers in regard to those incidents which I did not witness, I should be inclined to dismiss the whole tale of the fabric of a baseless imagination. But there is, unfortunately, no possibility of arguing with facts; and so, while I look back with amazement and dismay upon the scenes immediately preceding Wormwood's exit, I am unable to deny their reality. All that I can attempt is to present them in as simple and as accurate a fashion as possible so that the reader may be able to judge for himself while sharing in the conflicting emotions—the astonishment, the relief, the confusion, the regret—which agitate me even as I write . . .

The beginning of the end—although who could have suspected that fact?—is to be dated from Wormwood's acceptance of a commission to write a new series of articles for *The World's Affairs.*

It was only after prolonged coaxing on my part that the man from tomorrow could be induced to accept the offer. Not that the proposed terms were not liberal enough; not that the suggested work did not suit him, or that he expected to find a more desirable opening elsewhere! It was merely that the editor, in commenting upon Wormwood's previous contributions, had been guilty of a tactless remark.

"Our readers enjoyed your articles exceedingly," he declared in a letter to the man from to-morrow. "Numbers of persons have written in that they have rarely read anything more amusing."

"Now what do you think of that?" demanded Wormwood, as he flung the letter indignantly toward me. "You know me better than to suppose I meant to say anything amusing. Why, I was presenting a serious comparison of my own century and the present one! I pointed out the faults of this age, and tried to show the way to improvement! You don't know how much in earnest I was! How hard I labored over every word! And now people think I'm a humorist!"

"Well, Wormwood," said I, noticing what a disgruntled expression he was wearing, "don't be too downhearted. Isn't it the fate of all great men to be misunderstood?"

"I'll never write for that editor again! Never! Never!" he swore. "All my efforts would be lost! My good ideas thrown into the waste-heap! Why should I rack my brains to make some adolescent smile? They think me funny, do they? . . . Well, after this they can laugh at some other clown!"

"But, my dear friend," I pleaded, "do you think it will be different if you write for any other magazine? Besides, what harm if people do laugh a bit? I thought you said one of the troubles with the Neurotic Age is that it takes itself too seriously?"

"Well, that is so," he reflected. "Of course, that is so." Yet still he did not seem convinced. It was only by virtue of half an hour's argumentation, during which I again reverted forcibly to the practical necessities of the situation, that he begrudgingly agreed to accept the offer of *The World's Affairs.*

And thus, unwittingly, he paved the way for the bewildering climax of his career.

The articles, which Wormwood was to write, were all to be commentaries on current events. He was to witness various occurrences important and unimportant, and was to give his opinion of them from the point of view of the twenty-third century. Among other things, he was to attend a baseball game; a political meeting; a University Commencement; a reception to some visiting Admirals; a public debate; a literary forum—and in each case he was to try to tell how the event would have seemed in the twenty-third century. Unfortunately, I have not time to linger over his comments, which are available to any one who will take the trouble to consult the files of *The World's Affairs;* I need only say that, although Wormwood still wrote with serious intent, I could not help agreeing with the editor as to the deliriously funny nature of his articles. Even the dullest reader could hardly have helped chuckling when he attended a conference of leading Senators and Representatives and characterized them all as in their Decadent Epoch; or when he went to a grand opera and mistook it for burlesque owing to the exaggerated gestures of the actors. I believe, indeed, that had it not been for that unexpected circumstances which overwhelmed all our plans and projects, the man from tomorrow would in a short while have won a reputation as America's leading humorist.

The all-important assignment was one which at first seemed ordinary enough. A notorious murder case had been filling all the newspapers—notorious not because the crime had been exceptionally flagrant, but because there had been considerable question about the criminal intent of the accused, whose case had been appealed and whose sentence had been reprieved time and again, until at last it seemed doubtful whether he actually would go to the electric chair. His crime at worst, his defenders maintained, had been committed not wilfully but under the influence of an overmastering passion—which, of course, was not a justification, but did offer arguments for those who believed that his sentence should be commuted. In the end, however, all pleas and investigations had been of no avail, and upon the Governor's refusal for a final petition, Thomas Brogan's remaining days had been reduced to a mere thirty.

It was at this point that the man from to-morrow was commissioned by *The World's Affairs* to visit Sing Sing Penitentiary and interview the doomed party. Permission to enter the Death House had been granted by the prison authorities, and Wormwood duly made ready for the short trip to Ossining. But he did not seem to relish his task; and, before setting out, he expressed himself in no uncertain terms.

"So? In the Neurotic Age, they still considered it right to take human life? . . . Well, I have often read in our histories of the horrors of those uncivilized days, when punishment was so much more severe and crime so much more plentiful. It was only when the extreme penalty was abolished and human life came

into greater respect, that murder ceased to be common. But, of course, one had to expect many murders in an age when men were trained for wholesale killing in warfare."

Some more conversation in the same vein followed; and then Wormwood, after asking what train to take to Ossining and noting down the directions, shook my hand in his usual enthusiastic manner and jauntily departed. . . .

It was under strikingly altered circumstances that our next meeting occurred. Yet how little intimation I had of the approaching change! On the following day I received a telephone call from Wormwood, who informed me in a cheerful voice that he had been to Ossining, where he had had "some very interesting experiences." He expressed regret at not being able to see me and describe those experiments at present, but declared that he must leave at once for Washington to attend a Congressional Reception, and would probably return at about six or seven the following evening.

All of this, of course, I heard with only a casual interest. It was not before another twenty-four hours that I suddenly understood what importance attached to Wormwood's commonplace words—an importance which he himself came far from realizing.

At about five o'clock on the afternoon of my friend's promised return, I was annoyed by the arrival of two unexpected visitors. They were grim, frigid-looking men, with heavy, thick-boned faces and suspicious eyes; and I did not like the way they scowled at me as I came down to greet them. Nor was I pleased at the stars they showed me beneath their ordinary-looking gray coats. "Well, gentlemen," I said, mechanically, wondering what on earth the officers could want with me, "is there anything I can do for you? Be seated, won't you?"

My visitors thanked me, but remained standing.

"Sorry to disturb you, Professor Howard," began the elder of the pair, as he fumbled jerkily at his Derby hat. "Do you know anything of a man named John Wormwood?"

"John Wormwood?" I echoed, astonished. "Why, I —yes, I do know him."

The two policemen exchanged significant glances.

"Now Professor," continued my interviewer, "we got your name at the Faculty Club of your University. They told us you would know where to find Mr. Wormwood. He was not there when we came to call on him, which—er, under the circumstances, we might have expected."

"Under what circumstances?" I demanded, unhappily convinced that the man from to-morrow had gotten into a dangerous scrape.

Disregarding my question, the officer proceeded, "At the Faculty Club, no one seemed to know where Wormwood was, or when he would return. It's very important to find him, and you, Professor Howard, are the man to help us. If you will give me some clue——"

"Sorry, gentlemen," I interrupted, deciding upon a course of action. "I see that you are upon the wrong track. I can give you no clue. I do not know where Mr. Wormwood is. The last I saw of him was the day before yesterday, and I cannot say when I shall see him again. If, however, I do get track of him eventually, and you wish to be notified——"

"Notified, nothing!" flung back one of the men, with a snarl. "No, we're not asking to be notified! You understand, Professor Howard, the penalties for deliberately withholding information!"

At this impudent outburst, I had an impulse to retort angrily and order my callers out of the house. But, realizing that strategy is the better part of discretion, I managed to control myself, and to assume my sweetest and most suave tones:

"You are wasting your time, gentlemen. You may be sure that, if I could, I would do anything to assist you. Here is the best I can arrange—I'll give you the name of some one who is often in touch with Mr. Wormwood and may be able to help you. Better take this down: Professor Warrington — Charles Warrington — 1119 Morningside Drive."

My visitors noted down the name and address; thanked me brusquely; bowed, and departed.

Immediately after they had left, I reached for the telephone, and called a familiar number.

"Tell me, Warrington," one might have heard me saying, "do you know the latest about Wormwood? What sort of mess has he been getting into? . . . Oh! Read this afternoon's paper, you say! I certainly shall! . . . By the way, I'm afraid you're soon to have two visitors. Receive them warmly, Warrington; express your willingness to help them—but, for heaven's sake, don't give them any information . . . What's that? You'll pass them on to Professor Carroway? Fine! . . . Well, I'll be looking now for that paper."

After snapping down the receiver, I reached in excited haste for my hat, and, a moment later, was rushing toward the nearest newspaper stand at such a rate that some of my neighbors, having grown accustomed to my usual leisurely pace, paused to stare at me, as though fearing I had gone mad.

What new bit of insanity had the man from to-morrow perpetrated? I asked myself. Was it that he had gone back to wearing his twenty-third century costume? or that, in the too zealous attempt to paralyze some one, he had unintentionally committed murder?

Oppressed by such doubts, I reached the newspaper stand, flung down a few pennies, and picked up a copy of the afternoon *Star*. At the first glance, I observed nothing to interest me; there was little except the usual news about the riots in India, and about the proposed increase in naval armaments following the successful limitations conference. "Wonder what Warrington could have meant?" I muttered—and then, all at once, I saw! The article had escaped my attention because of its very prominence!

Spread over several columns at the top of the page, the following headlines met my eye:

"RIOT AT SING SING

"DEATH-HOUSE CONVICT FELLS GUARD"

"Checked in Attempt at Escape—Wormwood Sought."

Regardless of the stares of passers-by, I stood open-mouthed at the street corner, grasping the paper with trembling fingers, and reading:

"A riot at Sing Sing penitentiary was suppressed this morning with the aid of machine-guns, after Thomas Brogan, under sentence of death for the murder of Frederick Cramm, had broken loose with firearms and overpowered two guards. Brogan, who had secured the weapon surreptitiously and secreted it beneath his clothing, declared, under pressure, that he had received it from John Wormwood, the alleged visitor from the twenty-third century, who had secured admittance recently as interviewer for a well-known magazine. Wormwood is now being sought by the police. . . ."

CHAPTER XXIII

Strategy and Flight

WHILE the article in the *Star* offered me only the vaguest and most unsatisfactory notion of what had happened, I had read enough to know that Wormwood's situation was desperate. I could not

imagine how he had managed to secure firearms; much less could I understand what motive he had had in offering the weapons to the prisoner; but one thing at least was clear, agonizingly clear—he was guilty of a gross violation of the law, and was faced with the probability of a long prison term.

From that peril, obviously, he must be saved at any cost. Though no one had suffered more than I from the absurdities of Wormwood's conduct, or had been put to greater expense in time, temper and money, I would have been the last to wish him behind the bars. I must confess, now that I had discovered his danger, that I realized how strangely I was attached to the man from to-morrow; somehow, for all his curious manners and beliefs, he had earned a claim upon my affections, which it was impossible either to reason about or deny.

Yet what could I do to help him? Obviously, he must be warned; for in my telephone conversation with him only yesterday, he had shown no consciousness of danger. Then somehow his whereabouts must be kept from the police; and, above all, he must not return to the Faculty Club—for nothing was more certain than that the detectives would be in waiting for him there.

Yet, if no effort were made to save him, would he not return from Washington within an hour or two? Would he not hasten back to his room, and thus walk unsuspectingly into the trap the police had set for him?

It was clear that the only course was to reach him and warn him before he had returned to the Faculty Club. But how reach him and warn him? All that I knew was that, according to his own statement, Wormwood expected to be back at about six or seven o'clock —and I could not even say by what train he would travel or by what railroad he would arrive!

Yet half a chance, it seemed to me, was better than none at all; I must go to the railroad terminal by which the man from to-morrow seemed most likely to return, and must scan the passengers arriving from every Washington train. I well knew that I was more than likely to miss Wormwood; that possibly he had arrived already; that possibly he would not arrive at all to-day, or that in my anxiety I might overlook him even if he did come. But, regardless of such contingencies, I lost no time about going to the Maryland depot and inquiring as to the train schedule from Washington.

"The last train arrived ten minutes ago," the clerk brutally informed me. "The next will be in at 8.04."

Anxiously I glanced at my watch, and saw that it was exactly 6.16. Despondently I told myself that perhaps I had missed Wormwood by a hair's breadth; yet resignedly, in the hope that my friend had been delayed, I faced the prospect of a wait of almost two hours.

During the interval, after trying to snatch a bite at a station lunch counter and finding that I could not eat, I passed most of my minutes in vain speculation as to whether the man from to-morrow would be on the incoming train. Probably after all, I assured myself, Wormwood was already in town, and might even now be falling into the clutches of the police despite my efforts to save him.

This view was confirmed when at length the train—ten minutes late, as if for the sake of tantalizing me—had come rumbling into the station. Certainly, no fond parent or lovelorn swain ever fastened his gaze, more eagerly than did I, upon the throngs trailing through the exit; but alas! though the train seemed to have been well filled and scores of flushed and hastening passengers glided past, there was no familiar face among them all. Finally the streams of travelers began to dwindle; at last only a few slow-footed stragglers were issuing from the gateway. There came a fat lady puffing with a monstrous suitcase; then, for a brief blank interval, no one at all emerged. "You see! He's not coming!" I reflected. "How foolish to have waited!" And I was about to leave—when all at once I caught sight of the man from to-morrow.

He was idling along in the most leisurely manner possible, at the side of a perfect giant of a woman with whom he was chatting energetically. In one hand he held a huge traveling hatbox; in the other he swung a covered object that looked like a parrot-cage. "Yes, Madam," he was saying, in tones loud enough to be heard at a distance. "the method of travel by private wing-motor, which hasn't been invented yet——" But it was at this point that I interrupted him.

"Wormwood! Wormwood!" I exclaimed, eagerly, regardless of the fair stranger. "I'm so glad you've come! Quick! I must speak with you!"

I thought I had never before seen such a cold and cutting light in Wormwood's eyes. "Oh, how are you, Professor?" he exclaimed, turning to me in a surprised manner. "What are you doing here to-day?"

And with that, I believe, he would have passed on, had I not clutched him by the arm, and insisted, "I must speak with you, I say! At once, Wormwood! It's imperative!"

Something in my manner, if not in my words, must have informed him that I was in deadly earnest. None the less, he looked annoyed, and returned, coolly, "Oh, all right. All right. Just one minute, Professor. Can't you see I'm busy now? First I must help this gallant lady with her baggage."

The "gallant lady" burst into a low tittering, and permitted her escort to accompany her as far as the Parcel Room, where he bade her farewell in the demonstrative fashion of the twenty-third century. Since I kept at a respectable distance, I could not hear what they had to say; but I observed that, before making his final bow, Wormwood took out a notebook and pencil and jotted down several words at her dictation.

"A marvelous lady!" he enthused, as he rejoined me. "So kindly and agreeable! Next to Miss Whitcomb, she is the most chivalrous I have met in the twentieth century. I first saw her in the station at Washington. It was on account of her that I missed the train before this. She was most considerate—permitted me to help her with her grips, and even to order her dinner for her. Yes, indeed, her ways are exquisite! Too bad that one of such charm should be wasting herself as saleslady in a millinery shop——"

"Come! Come, Wormwood!" I protested. "I don't doubt that you could tell me her whole family history if we had time, but there are other things to think of just now. I must talk seriously with you."

"How's that?" he demanded, regarding me questioningly. "To come to think of it now, how does it happen that you're here to-day, Professor?"

I glanced warily to all sides, unhappily conscious that detectives might be observing us. And though apparently we were quite inconspicuous amid the station crowd, I realized that we must spare no precautions. Hence I bent close to Wormwood, and whispered into his ear, "Wait a while. I can't answer now. Come with me, and we'll try to talk things over."

"Why the mystery?" he gasped; and then, evidently resigned to silence, he accompanied me without a word to the taxicab stand at one end of the station. On the way, I almost had heart failure, for we ran face to face with a policeman, who, however, did not seem to recognize either of us as desperate characters. Avoiding this representative of law and order, we managed to gain a cab in safety; while I, at a loss what to say to the driver, flung out this strange request, "Central Park! Any nice secluded spot!"

The startled chauffeur bade me repeat the request; and then, as if uncertain if his ears had not deceived him, he nodded in a puzzled fashion, and set the taxi into motion.

"Now Wormwood," I began, relieved to be temporarily out of danger, "let's get down to business. It seems that you've got yourself into the perfect devil of a predicament. What on earth was it that you did at Sing Sing?"

"At Sing Sing?" he repeated, in tones of undisguised surprise. "Why, I did have some interesting experiences, as I told you. But what makes you think I did anything unusual?"

"Here is what makes me think so," I declared, drawing the newspaper article from an inner pocket. "Judging by the looks of things, they'll be wanting you back at Sing Sing for a lengthy stay."

He took the paper and glanced at it by the uncertain light, while I had temporarily become a little more steady, as the taxicab halted for the traffic signals.

For a second, Wormwood was silent. "What do you think of that? Poor Brogan didn't escape!" he sighed, in tones of vast disappointment. "Poor Brogan! He didn't escape! And I thought he would get away!"

"Forget about Brogan, and read on!" I demanded, indignantly. "How about your own predicament?"

Suddenly Brogan seemed to pass out of Wormwood's mind. "Well, if that isn't the strangest thing!" he blurted out, clutching the paper angrily, while once more we began moving on our way. "What damnable lies! This paper should be made to retract! I'll write them a letter! I'll—I'll——"

With fists clenched and shaking he paused, as if not knowing how to continue.

"Then is it all false?" I inquired, in the calmest tones I could command. "Did you have nothing whatever to do with the prison riot?"

"Riot? I know nothing about the riot!" he exclaimed. "Evidently that all happened after I left! All that I know is that the paper prints lies! Lies! Lies! Lies! All lies! I didn't give the convict any firearms!"

"What did you give him?" I asked, perceiving a sudden light.

"Not firearms Even if I'd had any weapons of the Man-Eating Ages, do you think I'd have given them to any one? Why, it's bad enough to see them in museums!—I'd as soon hug a rattlesnake as handle such utensils! No, my friend! All that I gave that poor unfortunate convict were the paralyzing rays!"

My surprise was strangely confirmed. "Paralyzing rays?" I repeated. "Now I understand! But don't you see, Wormwood, that's against the law!"

"Why?" he demanded, uncomprehendingly. "What have I done against the law? I was merely doing my duty. Any humane person would have done the same. It is true, I sacrificed my rays—but that was in order to save a man's life. In this age, is it punishable to save life?"

"Under certain circumstances," I declared. "Better tell me all about it, Wormwood. Then we may know better what to do for you."

"Well," he returned, leaning back in his seat with a grave, reminiscent expression, "it's all very simple. I saw this poor wretch, Thomas Brogan, who, I was surprised to find, was a human being like you and me—not half so vicious-looking as many men you pass on the street. I rather took a liking to the unlucky devil; he was the sort I might have made a friend of, if he hadn't been caged like a wolf. It made me almost shed tears to think how, in less than a month, he was to be coldly and mechanically taken out and shrivelled to death. Think of the horror of the long waiting! He would have to die not one death but a hundred! It seemed to me that no man, no matter how guilty, should be submitted to such torture. And so I resolved to help him. Now you know that I had only one vial of the paralyzing rays, which I couldn't replace—but, just the same, I didn't have to think twice before giving them to this poor Brogan. I waited till the keeper seemed momentarily off his guard; then I slyly passed them to the prisoner, and whispered, 'Watch for your chance, then point this at the jailor's breast, and press the little button near the top.' And Brogan took the rays; but though he couldn't say anything in reply, the expression in his eyes was reward enough for me."

"Now I see what has happened!" said I, slowly. "Now I see! Brogan waited a day or two before finding his chance, then paralyzed two of the jailors and tried to escape. The other guards, coming up and seeing the ray-instrument, thought it was a pistol. That's how the report about the firearms got circulated. Well, the whole affair is most unfortunate, Wormwood. Most unfortunate!"

"Yes, most unfortunate!" he agreed mournfully. "Poor old Brogan didn't even get away!"

By this time we were gliding among the winding drives of Central Park. Suddenly, in a fairly well-wooded section, the car stopped short and the driver asked whether we wished to go any further. "No," I decided, emphatically. "This place is ideal." And after descending with my companion and paying the fare, I led Wormwood aside into a clump of shrubbery where, it seemed to me, we would be free to continue our discussion without fear of a dangerous intrusion.

Never had I felt so much like a criminal, as when we began our whispered conversation in that shadowy retreat. It seemed to me almost as if it were I, and not Wormwood, that was being sought by the police; I could half have believed myself a fugitive from justice, for the darkness and secrecy of the night combined to create a sense of mystery, and I was strangely transported back to the imaginings of my early youth, when I had pictured myself involved in daring and piratical adventures . . .

"Now Wormwood," I began, as I huddled close to him with my back in uncomfortable proximity to a projecting rock, "we've got to get you out of your predicament —which means we must save you from the police. But how is that possible? There is nowhere in this country you can go; your twenty-third century ways would be certain to make you conspicuous. Hence, although I'm sorry to say so, there's only one course left. You've got to get out of this century."

"Got to get out of this century?" echoed the startled Wormwood, as he nervously began to rustle some dead leaves in the dark.

"Not so much noise there! Please!" I muttered. "You'll be giving yourself away." And, after he had grown silent again, I continued, "Yes, Wormwood, you've got to get out of this century. The only safe thing will be to return the way you came—to go back to your own age, your own people."

"Ah, if only I could!" he sighed. "How often I've thought of it!—how often I've been homesick for it! My hyper-space observatory!—a natural life once more, with natural food, natural clothing, and a natural place to sleep. And natural people to live with—and Maranna among them! Yes, I've often been homesick for it, though it's only a dream that can never come true!"

"It's much more than a dream!" I dissented. "It can come true!" And briefly I told of Cloud's invention for projecting a man into the Fourth Dimension.

Wormwood, however, did not seem impressed. "In my own times," he declared, "it was mere child's play to get into the Fourth Dimension. But how is that possible for you twentieth century folk? As I've told you before, you have no molecular compressors, no radio-propeller gauges, no——"

"But all that doesn't matter!" I broke in, abruptly. And I described the experiment I had witnessed, in which a small notebook had been whirled out of our dimension, and then recovered.

"Well, yes—in a crude way, maybe it is possible for you to get into the Fourth Dimension," Wormwood conceded, begrudgingly. "What makes me most doubtful is though I've made a study of the subject, that I can't remember reading that any successful Dimension Traversers were invented so early as the twentieth century. However, being really anxious to get back to my own times, I'd be ready to do anything reckless. Yes, I'd even take a chance with one of your primitive models."

"Good," said I, as I shifted my position slightly and painfully scratched my hands on some invisible creeper. "Then shall we pay a visit to Mr. Cloud?"

"Well, yes, perhaps. But aren't you being just a little hasty?" he argued. "It's all right to leave this century, but I don't like to be exactly rushed out of it. I think it's only fair to take a few minutes before deciding on a change of three hundred years. There are several things still weighing on my mind."

"What things?" I inquired, wondering what there could be to weigh upon his mind by comparison with the fact that he was wanted by the police.

For several seconds he was silent. In the darkness, unfortunately, I could not see the expression of his face; eventually something that sounded like a sigh issued from between his lips. He shifted uneasily; he cleared his throat, then coughed before continuing:

"Well, you see, Professor, it's this way. There is a lovely lady who—er—whom I don't like to be deserting. Can't you gues whom I mean?"

"Alice Whitcomb!" I caught up, impatiently. "Well, forget about her, Wormwood! She's not for you! Why, she wouldn't care what century you're sent to!"

"Now it would be a terrible thing," he continued, mournfully, "to get back to my own century, and then to remember that the charming Alice Whitcomb is dead—dead for nearly three hundred years! No, I could never bear that thought! What if it does cause me some suffering?—I'll be loyal! I'll stay in this century! I'll take my chances of going to prison! For her sake, I'll take my chances!"

In his excitement, the man from to-morrow lifted his voice to such a pitch, that I began to fear we would be discovered. At the same time, he swung out his arms in eloquent gesticulations, barely missing my nose in the dark, and not missing the shrubbery, with which his hands collided with a sharp, threshing sound.

"For heaven's sake, Wormwood, be quiet!" I cautioned. "If you keep on that way, you'll never get back to your own times!"

Then all at once, as I recalled a letter which I had received yesterday or the day before and deposited in my portfolio, I began to fumble about anxiously in my pocket.

"Look at this, Wormwood," I pointed out, striking a match and dimly making out the envelope by the momentary glow. "I want to show you how much cause you have to be thinking of Miss Whitcomb."

Wormwood leaned close to me; while, striking a second match, I showed him a tiny notation. "This letter. you see, is from Dr. Horn."

"Yes, I see!" he acknowledged, as the light fluttered into darkness. "But what has that to do with me?"

"Now notice what Dr. Horn says," I continued, while, with shaking hands, I lit a third match, and, in my nervousness, nearly set fire to the paper.

The match flared, flickered, and went out; but, by its dying illumination, the man from to-morrow was able to decipher the first words of the letter. "Dear Professor," he read, in a shaky voice, "Alice and I were quietly married last night——"

As we plunged once more into darkness, a low moan issued from Wormwood's throat. I felt his hand grasping my wrist with a shuddering intensity; I felt the quivers that ran through his whole body; I heard his mournful words, "So! So she has betrayed me! She was not loyal! She would not give me a chance! She would not wait for me! She took another instead! Oh, that is unworthy of her! How much, much less chivalrous than I had thought!"

I said nothing, but waited for the outburst to subside.

"Why did she have to be in such a hurry? Why? Why?" he continued, passionately. "Why did she have to take him?—to take him!—when she could have had me? Oh, how disappointed I am in her! How disappointed! Not even to let me know! Never, never have I been so betrayed before!"

The man from to-morrow bent low, his face buried in his sleeves; despite his silence, I could have half-imagined that he was giving way to sobs.

But after a few moments, he suddenly flung his head upward, and, with a resigned gesture and in a changed voice, resumed, "Come! Take me back to my own age, Professor! Take me back! I have seen enough of this century! It has robbed and cheated me too much! It has robbed and cheated me, and has given nothing in return! I want my own age, and Maranna—I want Maranna once more!"

Abruptly he rose to leave. By the vague light of the ascending moon, I saw that his eyes were mistily shining; while he walked with face downcast, and his shoulders drooped as though beneath some intolerable weight.

CHAPTER XXIV

The Disappearance

BY the time that we had reached Cloud's apartment, it was after ten o'clock. I did not know whether the inventor would be at home, or whether, on the other hand, we should have to disturb his slumbers; but, in any event, I considered our mission urgent enough to justify the unexpectedness of our call.

As we alighted from the taxicab, I was able to glance up toward Cloud's windows, which were on the second floor left. Much to my relief, I could see bright chinks of light issuing from behind the drawn shades; as a result of which I became so excited that I did not even wait for my change from the taxicab driver, but flutteringly hastened with Wormwood into the building and up the stairs.

A moment later, upon pressing the inventor's doorbell, I was disconcerted to hear something that sounded like a growl from within. A minute passed, and the door was not opened; I was forced to ring a second time, and even a third, before I could evoke any response. "Who the devil is there?" finally came an irritated voice. "What do you want?"

I am afraid that my own voice sounded more than a little irritated as I called back, "It's we, Cloud! Can't you let us in?"

Abruptly the door opened, to reveal an annoyed-looking Cloud, clad in a dressing gown discolored with chemicals.

"Oh, you, Professor!" he exclaimed, in evident surprise, as he took my hand. "And you, Mr. Wormwood! I thought it was the landlord! He always picks the most ungodly hours to call for the rent! Well, come in and make yourselves at home."

Without another word he led us into his laboratory, where the Dimension Machine gleamed and glittered with rods and mirrors unbared. Since I had last seen it, I noticed, several changes had been made, of which the most conspicuous was in the shape of a wire container, more than five feet in height and several feet across,

which replaced the smaller receptacle used in the experiment with the notebook. At the opposite end of the machine a series of blue and purplish sparks was flickering and buzzing; while, close at hand, a mad confusion of tongs, pliers and other tools lay strewn about the floor.

"Just now, when you got here," stated Cloud, as we entered the room, "I was at work on a Dimensional Inter-calculator. Another little kink or two smoothed out, and it will be perfect. An idea had occurred to me just as you rang the bell. You don't mind waiting a few minutes, do you?"

"Not at all!" I was bound to assure him. Yet I was quivering with such impatience that every moment of delay was certain to be a moment in Purgatory.

With glittering-eyed eagerness, Cloud went back to his pliers; and, seemingly forgetful of our presence, began to work once more at his machine. The sparks flashed and scintillated; the levers moved and rattled; the inventor's face glowed with an excited interest; but the clock on the wall continued to tick and tick and tick and tick never-endingly, while Wormwood and I fidgeted and waited.

Nearly an hour had gone by before at last the inventor gave a triumphant whoop. "It's done!" he ejaculated. "Done! The Inter-calculator is finished! Look at that, will you? Works like a charm! Come, want to see?"

"Not now! Please, not just now, Mr. Cloud," I protested. "We have something much more urgent to consult you about."

"More urgent?" he repeated, in surprise, seeming for the first time to realize that there may have been a reason for our visit. And then, all at once penitent, he apologized, "I'm sorry, I had forgotten about your coming here. I was so interested in that Inter-calculator that I couldn't pin my thoughts down to anything else. You really must pardon me. Now let's hear what's on your mind, Professor."

Solemnly I took a seat opposite the inventor; and, while Wormwood stood looking on speechlessly, I launched into a full description of the events of the day, from the visit of the detectives to Wormwood's acceptance of my plan to send him back to the twenty-third century.

"Now, Mr. Cloud," I concluded, "it seems to me the only question to decide is whether the machine is ready yet for Wormwood's return. Judging from what you told me when I was here last, and from what I myself saw——"

"Yes, yes, I understand," Cloud interrupted, with a thoughtful wave of the hand. "The Dimension Bridge, of course, is complete, so that it will be possible to leave this dimension at any time now. I myself was planning to make the experiment within a few days. But there's still just one little question in my mind. That is to say, there is just one little trouble."

"What trouble?" I demanded, anxiously. "Nothing serious, I hope?"

Cloud hesitated perceptibly. "No, nothing really serious. It's only a technical detail—the Reverse Brakes still need a little adjustment. You realize what would happen if they should fail. After sending a man out of this century, we couldn't be sure of ever being able to get him back again."

"Oh, is that all?" I laughed. "Well, that's all right. Once Wormwood has left this century, I'm sure he won't want to return."

"I can imagine no more terrible misfortune than to have to come back," affirmed Wormwood. "So, you see, I'm not at all sorry the Reverse Brakes are out of order."

"Oh, well, if that's the way you feel about it," agreed Cloud, "no doubt I can help you. Since you're all ready to leave, we can commence at once. There will be only a few preliminaries to arrange."

"All right. Go ahead, arrange the preliminaries," sighed Wormwood. And then, as he caught sight of his reflection in one of the mirrors, he sighed again, and murmured, "Too bad! I'm really not in any condition at all to go on such a long journey. Couldn't we possibly—couldn't we possibly wait till tomorrow?"

"Wait till tomorrow?" I cried, as Cloud began a final critical inspection of the mirrors and levers. "Are you crazy? Tomorrow you may not be permitted to leave."

"Well," he explained, as he dolefully regarded himself in the mirror, "I was just thinking that if we waited till tomorrow, I might be able to get my own clothes back. I mean, the suit I came here in. Can you imagine what the people of my own century will say if they see me in these things? Can you imagine how Maranna will laugh? Why, wouldn't you laugh yourself if you saw a man all locked up in a fifteenth century coat of mail? When you come to think of it, wouldn't it be much better to wear nothing at all?"

With that, Wormwood started to slough off his coat. I fear that, had I not made a motion to restrain him, he would not have checked himself until every other garment had followed.

"Better give me a few minutes more," Cloud requested, as he bent down to tighten a screw on one of the mirrors. "I want to make sure that everything is in place. There's no telling what would happen if even one rod or lever got loose."

"You know, Cloud," I encouraged, "I'm coming to admire your work more and more each day. After you've done a good job for Wormwood, you may be sure my colleagues and I will spare no efforts to bring your achievements world-wide recognition."

Cloud smiled, thanked me, and proceeded with his work with increased gusto.

Meanwhile the man from to-morrow, his thin face drawn into a funereal expression, had come to me and firmly taken both my hands.

"Professor," he declared—and, as he spoke, there were tears in his eyes—"I want you to know how hard this parting will be for me. I have greatly appreciated your friendship, and for your sake I would almost be willing to remain in this century. I shall not forget you in my own age; it will be a deep sorrow to know how long you have been dead. But I shall revere your memory, Professor. Yes, you may be sure I shall revere your memory."

I thanked him rather coldly, I fear; for I was not exactly anxious to be reduced to a mere memory.

"After I get back to the twenty-third century," Wormwood continued, meditatively, "I wonder how long I will seem to have been away. Perhaps not an hour; perhaps not even a minute. I may not seem to have been gone at all. They may tell me my adventures in the twentieth century were only a dream. Ah, well! Maybe that's what they really are. Already they seem pretty much like a dream to me. After I've been back a while, I may even be ready to laugh at them myself. But, at any rate, I may tell of them to Maranna occasionally on summer evenings when we sit together in the moon-parlor of the Observatory, or go flying around Mount Holrood on our private triplane. And Maranna at least will be real enough. After all, Professor, the ladies of the twenty-third century are the most honorable, the most steadfast. I'm coming to the conclusion that it's really a mistake to love out of one's own century."

"It's a mistake to do anything at all out of one's own century," I was on the point of remarking—when Cloud announced that he had finished his inspection of

Suddenly there came a violent hissing sound; suddenly the atmosphere began to flare with the scintillation of blue sparks. The levers of the machine commenced to twist and unlock, a confusion of indescribable reflections met my eyes, and I was aware that the wire cage, with Cloud and Wormwood in it, was beginning to revolve at a dizzying rate.

the machine and had found it in perfect readiness for the experiment.

"Now we'll set the Dimension Gauge for three hundred years ahead," continued the inventor, turning to a device like an enlarged radio dial. "You see, it's an improvement on the old aparatus, which was likely to be a century or two off in its bearings. With this new contrivance, we can gauge our time down to the fraction of a year."

"I should hope so!" mumbled Wormwood, anxiously. "It would be a trifle annoying to be deposited by mistake in the twenty-fourth century—or in the twenty-second."

"Oh, never fear!" Cloud consoled him, as he cautiously adjusted the dial. "Now there! It's all fixed! Nothing left but to get into the Dimension Carrier and set things going!"

With these words, the inventor stepped toward the large wire case at one end of the machine. "Guess I'd better show you in what position to lie, so as to avoid dangerous after-effects," he proceeded. And, stepping on to a chair, he let himself down into a wire apparatus, in the bottom of which he curled up like a snail.

Then it was that, while I stood staring questioningly at Cloud, there occurred that unexpected event, the recollection of which bewilders and torments me even to-day.

As the inventor climbed into the wire container, Wormwood's excitement was rising by leaps and bounds. A flush had come into his face; his limbs were quivering; his fingers restlessly tapped and tapped at his clothing; his eyes were a-glitter with a wild, impatient fire. I believe that, in his agitation, he momentarily lost control of himself; at all events, he certainly did not take time to reason, but gave way to the unbridled impulses of the moment. When he saw Cloud at the bottom of the wire cage and heard the shouted words, "All right! All right now!", he evidently misunderstood, and did not pause to consider that what Cloud meant was that his demonstration of the proper position was all right. Hearing, apparently, only what he desired to hear, he assumed that he had been directed to enter the machine; with disconcerting haste, he leaped on the chair, his hands grasping the steel supports of the container, and began to let himself down beside the inventor.

Now things began to happen with lightning rapidity. At first Cloud, seeing the man from to-morrow entering the wire cage was merely startled and annoyed. "Wait a minute, there!" he cried. "Let me out first! You're making things hard——"

But, almost immediately, his annoyance gave place to alarm. "For God's sake!" he yelled, as he sprang to his feet—and all at once his face went white. "For God's sake, get your foot off there! Don't, don't touch that!"

His warning had come too late. "Don't touch what?" cried the man from to-morrow, already more than half in the container. But, even as he spoke, he had pressed his foot against a little half concealed knob. And, with that, the damage had been done.

Suddenly there came a violent hissing sound; suddenly the atmosphere began to flare with the scintillation of blue sparks. The levers of the machine commenced to twist and unlock, the wires to buzz and clatter, the mirrors to turn and rotate; a confusion of indescribable reflections met my eyes, and I was aware that the wire cage, with Cloud and Wormwood in it, was beginning to revolve at a dizzying rate.

"Oh, my God, now you've done it!" came the frantic voice of Cloud. "Professor! Professor! Pull the reverse! Quick Pull the reverse! Quick!—before it's too late!"

With frenzied speed, and at the risk of losing a hand beneath the swiftly propelled rods, I pulled what I imagined to be the proper lever. But, in my haste, I must have touched off the acellerator by mistake; for instantly the sparks and sputtering grew much more violent; the levers began to vibrate more rapidly than ever, the mirrors to rotate at a delirious rate. And the wire container, with its two human occupants, whirled round and round faster and faster, faster and faster and ever faster. Vaguely, above the clattering of the bars and glasses, I could hear the terrified cries of the imprisoned men but I had lost sight of them utterly; so swiftly were they being swung round and round that they made but a mottled blur through which, after a moment, the yellow blankness of the opposite wall became visible.

I shall never be able to say how that mad scene came to an end. I do not believe that more than sixty seconds went by before it was all over; but I was scarcely aware of what I saw, heard or did; I acted with the mechanical fury of a wild man. Ignorant as I was of Cloud's machine, I fumbled recklessly with the knobs and levers, in the crazed hope that chance might show me the Reverse; I turned dials; I pressed buttons; I shifted rods; I switched on electric bulbs. Yet everything that I did seemed only to increase the speed and fury of the rotating mirrors, the insane haste of the whirling wire container. Had I been in possession of my senses, the straining, cracking noises of the overstressed machine would have warned me of danger; but, in my panic, I had no ear for warnings, and continued crazily to press buttons and pull levers—until all at once, with such suddenness that I cannot account for it even now, there came a deafening report. A flash of fire seemed to leap across the room and through my very brain; I was conscious of a dull, reeling sensation, as though I had been struck by a club; then instantly all things went blank before me, and I was swept into oblivion.

When I came to myself again, my head was still oppressed by a dull sensation, and I was vaguely aware that there were bandages above my eyes. My first feeling was one of utter confusion, as though I were dreaming, or had died and awakened in another world; and it was only by degrees that I recognized that I was in bed, and made out the details of a neat, white-walled room that seemed strangely unfamiliar. Not until the entrance of a woman in scupulous white, with the precise and orderly manners of a trained nurse, did it dawn upon my clouded consciousness that I was in the hospital; and then for some time I could not make out the reason for being in such a place.

"Be quiet and try to sleep," the woman whispered to me. "You are still very weak. You have been through a severe strain. . . ."

Several days later, when my wounds were healing and I was well enough to sit up in bed, I was told what had happened. The explosion that had felled me had been so loud as to send several of the neighbors rushing in alarm to Cloud's apartment. Summoning a policeman, they had broken down the door; and, entering, they had found me cut and bruised and apparently lifeless on the floor, in the midst of a wilderness of shattered mirrors, twisted steel rods, and broken wires and coils. At first they had given me up for dead, and it had been hours before I had shown signs of returning consciousness; indeed, I had survived only by a miracle, for the explosion had occurred with such violence as to bury steel bolts and screws deep in the walls and to wreck the Dimension Machine beyond possibility of repair.

Almost the first question I asked, when again capable of speaking, was whether any other human beings had been found in the room. But my informant looked surprised, and assured me, "No, you were quite alone.

There was no sign that any one else had been present."

So, after all, I reflected, the man from to-morrow had left this dimension! But the worst of it was that Cloud had left with him! He would never reap the fruits of his genius; his miraculous invention was lost irredeemably!

Yet had he and Wormwood actually gone to the twenty-third century? What if, owing to my interference, the machine had been thrown out of gear, depositing them in the twenty-first century—or in the twenty-eighth? Alas! either possibility might have come to pass! and the truth would never be known to me!

The police, however, report that they are following several important clues.

If I was mystified, however, I was not alone in my doubts. In testimony to the fact, I quote from a newspaper article, which is only typical of many that appeared a short while after the disaster:

"MYSTERIOUS DISAPPEARANCE OF WORMWOOD

"Man Wanted on Felony Charge Eludes Police

"The local police profess themselves still baffled at the disappearance of John Wormwood, known as 'The Man from To-morrow,' who is wanted on a charge of inciting a riot at Sing Sing Penitentiary. Descriptions and photographs of the alleged felon have been flashed to every city on the continent, and departing trains and steamers are being carefully watched. Several arrests have been made, but in every case the suspect has had to be released. Professor Ellery Howard, who is reputed to have been intimate with Wormwood, and who is now at Vanderbrook Hospital recovering from a recent accident, refuses to make any statement except that he has no knowledge of the missing man's whereabouts and expect within a few days to have the supposed culprit safely behind the bars."

THE END.

Mu and Atlantis

By Allen Glasser

Mu and Atlantis, in the dawn of time,
Rose to the surface from the ocean's slime.
They hardened, bred a race of men—and then
The sea reached up and took its own again.

They are forgotten now, and all their glory
And prowess but an unremembered story.
Considered in the light of all they knew,
Should we seem wise to denizens of Mu?

Were theories our scientists propound
Possibly old before Atlantis drowned?
Yet in the modern world each new day breeds
Its own fresh crop of cults, conventions, creeds,

Concerning which we wrangle and grow hot
To prove just what is true and—what is not;
As passioned men no doubt were wont to do
When they lived on the continent of Mu.

For our beliefs we gladly die, or slay
Our brothers, as Atlantians did one day.
Should we grow heated in our arguments
If we recalled those vanished continents?

All whose disputes were neatly settled when
The sea upheaved and drew them down again?

The Mother World

by Bruce and G. C. Wallis

Author of "The Children of the Sphinx"

THIS story may be properly characterized as a remarkable study in the psychological sense, as well as descriptive of the most interesting adventures in the far-off world many light-years distant from the solar system.

Illustrated by MOREY

Foreword

NO doubt many readers will shrug their shoulders at this story. I know that I should myself, in spite of the evidence I shall bring forward, if I had not happened to be one of the chief actors in the astounding drama.

Being one of the actors—on the boards, so to speak, from first to last—and being also something of a scribbler, the others have chosen me to tell the story. More than that, they expect me to impress and convince you, to make you realize and accept the message we have brought from the confines of the universe.

Bear with me if you can. Try and believe that I am telling you the plain and sober truth—and that I am telling it to you for your own good.

Just one more rumination. Though I say it myself, this experience I am going to relate is the most amazing, the most tremendous adventure through which human beings from this earth have ever passed.

And it began so queerly, so unexpectedly.

CHAPTER I.

Baiting a Scientist

WE were a select little party at Locke's well-appointed table. Whatever people said about Locke behind his back, they never refused an invitation. His housekeeper knew how to run the house, and everything was always of the best. She spent his money freely, but she gave value for it. She never appeared in public, so she doesn't figure in the story.

There were seven of us that night—ah, the mystic seven!—and not one of us will ever forget it.

It began a little stiffly at first, as most dinners do, warming up as the wine went down and tongues were eased. For some reason then unknown to the rest of us, Locke was in exceedingly good spirits.

Just a few words about our host.

No one doubted his mentality, his abnormal brain; but many folks had an idea that his genius was of the kind that is near akin to madness.

Society tolerated this mild madman because he had inherited a huge fortune. His father's brain had run solely to business acumen. Our host was looked upon as a harmless dreamer who could be safely humored; whose ideas one could, with tongue in check, admire.

For his ideas were so—well, you'll see.

Even I, Mark Arden, a youngster reading for the Bar, and in love with his daughter, Edith, did not take Austin Locke too seriously.

I'm not so sure of Marjorie Lester, Edith's grown-up friend. She says she never under-rated the scientist—but she may be speaking in the light of later events.

Need I say much about Edith? You know what I mean. She is of medium height, aglow with life and radiant health. She has pansy eyes, delicate cheeks, lovely hair, perfect features. Not a bit clever in her father's way. Rather a flirt, but thoroughly good at heart. She said she didn't want to marry for years and years—she wanted to "live her own life."

Take all this as read, and add that Edith was—is—and ever will be—the only woman in the universe for me.

Marjorie Lester, a self-reliant woman of the world, ten years older than Edith, was also good looking in a way. Tall, dark, distinguished, and possessing great charm, she made an excellent foil to her friend—and, let me add, with emphasis, an excellent companion for Edith's father. She entered into that strange dream of his as did no one else.

Why did they never marry? Lots of people wondered how it was that Locke was so blind. Though older, and a widower who professed to find all he needed in life in the pursuit of his abtruse studies, everyone felt that the match was crying out for consummation.

That's four of our dinner party.

The others were Roy Ormond, a journalistic acquaintance of my own, at the enthusiastic stage when everything is "copy"; Doctor Harriet MacEarn, a lady medico equally eager over her work; and Professor Andrea Chalcote.

He was really the star guest of the evening, for it was to celebrate his discovery of the new element—Chalcony—that we seven were gathered together in the panelled dining room of Zodiac Lodge.

Locke and Chalcote had been lifelong friends—at college and university together, and amiable rivals ever since. I remember a mutual acquaintance once telling me, over a confidential smoke, that the two scientists had both loved the same girl.

"It was pretty serious with them," said my in-

formant. "You won't be surprised, when I tell you that Edith is the living image of her mother. . . . Well, Austin won, and Chalcote very handsomely forgave them both. The two men have remained close friends ever since, in spite of the fact that Locke soon neglected his charming wife in his absorbing zeal for the wild dream that possesses him. I sometimes wonder . . . er . . . whether Chalcote *has* forgotten."

This year's old scrap of conversation came into my mind, oddly enough, at table that eventful evening. I was opposite Chalcote, with Marjorie on my left hand. Chalcote, never a great talker, was making some sarcastic remarks, in a roughly good-humored sort of way, about Locke's high spirits, and now and then I fancied I detected a flavor of real malice in his voice, caught a gleam of smouldering hate in his half-veiled eyes.

Of course, it was nonsense, I told myself.

"Austin seems too cheerful," he said. "It might be he who had been interviewed and diploma'd, instead of my unworthy self. He might, judging by his beaming face, be on the verge of realizing that mad idea of his. He might be starting for the Moon, or even for Mars, to-night!"

"And supposing . . . just supposing for a moment, my dear Andrea . . . that you were right? Supposing that I had ended my studies, discovered my method, made and perfected my apparatus for such a voyage, and were ready to start at any moment . . . would you come with me?"

A laugh went around the table at Chalcote's expense.

"Got you this time, Prof!" said Roy Ormond. "Make me the offer, Mr. Locke, and I'm on!"

"It's such a safe offer," observed Dr. MacEarn; but Marjorie whispered in my ear:

"I'm afraid Austin has done something extraordinary."

The Professor had now recovered himself.

"Of course I would come with you, Austin. It would be the opportunity of a lifetime . . . to leave the earth, to travel in space, to visit the planets. When shall I be ready? But, in all seriousness, I am sure we should appreciate a little information about your methods . . . about what you have been doing in that mysterious workshop of yours out there at the bottom of the garden."

"I've been in often," said Edith, "but I'm sure I can't tell you. There's a lot of dirty, smelly machinery, and wires, and a sort of . . ."

"That will do, Edith. They wouldn't understand if you made them a catalogue of my appliances."

"But, Mr. Locke," persisted the irrepressible Roy, "you might tell us something. How do you think man will ever be able to leave the earth? Will somebody have to be fired from a big gun, in a sort of big shell, or shall we have to overcome gravitation? It seems a pretty hopeless proposition to me, though I've read Verne and Wells, and all the other romances on the subject."

"Yes, Austin, just tell us how you propose to achieve the impossible," sneered Chalcote.

"Yes, do . . . do . . . please," we chorused.

Locke looked around the table, somewhat as a bear baited by dogs might regard his tormentors. Then, with a confident smile, he assured what Edith called "his best platform manner."

"Once more, supposing that I have discovered ways and means to realize my life's ambition, to which my whole time, brain and fortune have been devoted for over twenty years, I shall only humor your collective curiosity, if you will all agree to look at the problem seriously. I have not labored all this time just to be made a laughing-stock."

We schooled our faces into mock severity.

"Go ahead, Austin," growled Chalcote.

"Go ahead!" we cried in unison.

"Well," said Locke, "it very early became evident to me that if men were ever to leave this earth and journey in space—at any rate, with any prospect of safe return—there were four problems to solve. The problems of food and water supply for the travelers, the problem of air supply, the problem of speed and the problem of direction. Modern chemistry has solved the first two of these—and I have solved the two latter."

"Or so you suppose," Chalcote muttered.

Locke took no notice, but went on:

"I also saw that a projectile fired from some sort of gun, no matter how large and powerful, would be of no use. For one thing, the terrific shock of starting would be fatal to any person placed in such a missile. For another, the speed would constantly be diminishing. It would be a matter of days, even weeks, as Verne saw, to reach the Moon. To reach Mars, at the same rate, would take about three years. And to reach any of the nearer stars—well, a good many lifetimes.

"I had gone a long way in the right path—I will take credit to myself for that—when Einstein changed our whole conception of the universe, and showed me the way that led to my final success. I saw that man's only hope lay in "Speed"—speed unthinkable, speed superior to the speed of light itself. I saw that I must take a vessel of ample size to contain a crew of voyagers, their food, water and air for a long period, and that I must somehow cut off this vessel from all the controlling influences of surrounding matter."

"But how would that make it travel?" asked Roy.

"It has taken me years to answer that question, but I *can* answer it," replied Locke with a ring of fanatical triumph in his voice. "What would happen to us if we could go up in an aeroplane, and suddenly hang fixed in the air? The earth, turning on its axis, would revolve under us. Knowing that we were motionless, we should yet seem to be flying round the earth from east to west.

"Now Einstein has taught us that the whole universe, as far as we know it, is a sort of sphere of matter rolling and revolving in the absolute void. All its lines and motions are curves, though on so vast a scale that to us they appear straight. He tells us that the velocity of light is the highest possible velocity."

"And if your ship travels as fast as light," said Chalcote, triumphantly, "it would take you over three years to reach the nearest star!"

"The nearest star will be too near for me," was Locke's quiet reply. "I have gone further than Einstein. I have discovered that great as is the speed of light, it is as nothing to the speed with which the universe turns upon itself in its flight through nothingness. The speed of light is the ultimate velocity *within* the universe, but the universe itself travels more than one thousand times as fast. So I had only to make my travel-vessel dead, inert, cut it off from the action of all surrounding matter, and . . ."

"Yes . . . yes . . . I see!" cried Marjorie Lester. "Your vessel would be isolated, it would hang absolutely still in space, the earth would leave it, the stars would rush past it at a thousand times the speed of light. You would be able to . . . to reach the great star Sirius in less than a week! It would be glorious!"

"It's a tall order," said Roy Ormond. "Will you let

Unable to speak for the wonder of it, we had a brief glimpse of the walls of the observatory crashing to ruin as we rose.

me go as special correspondent, Mr. Locke?"

"It's sheer rubbish," said Chalcote, "—sheer rubbish! My old friend is amusing himself. Such a vessel could not be made, and if it were made no one would be fool enough to venture to go into it."

Locke rose to his feet, his face white with passion.

"I have made such a vessel, Chalcote. It will do what I have said, and if no one else dares, *I* shall go in it. Come—you shall see it!"

CHAPTER II.

The Spheroid

As the noiseless waiters appeared in answer to the bell, Locke led us through the long French window into the garden.

Laughing, chattering, pleased, excited, we followed him, a merry group. We were his guests, we had to humor him. Yet, as my hand sought and clasped Edith's cool fingers, and we drew close as we walked, I could not help noticing that Marjorie Lester, just in front of us, was the only silent member of the party. Everyone else was talking and Chalcote's rasping voice rose above all.

"Now for the Great Secret!" he shouted, as we came to the laboratory door. "This way to the Stars! Where's the ticket-office, old friend?"

Ignoring him, Locke produced a key and opened the door. Stepping within, he found a switch and flooded the building with light.

It was a strange place, and this was the first time I had been privileged to enter it. A vast, domed building, surrounded by lawns and trees, it seemed a queer location for a workshop, but money can do much.

Locke's toilers—all highly trained men—came dressed as clerks until within the building. His materials were delivered at night. His furnaces consumed their own smoke. So sound-proofed were the walls that little noise of his mysterious activities was heard outside. Here he had labored incessantly for twenty years, and until to-night, had kept the secret his own.

Words failed us all when we entered; even the cub reporter and the grim Professor were dumb.

The domed, glass roof, higher than the roof of Zodiac Lodge itself, was slit by an aperture from which a telescope protruded. The tick of the regulating clockwork that moved telescope and aperture, following the movement of the stars, was like a steady metronome beating in an uncanny silence.

But that which drew our eyes, which tied our tongues, was the Spheroid itself, the gigantic result of Locke's years of thought, of research, of labor.

It lay in the jaws of a pair of mighty steel trestles. Its bulk filled more than half of that great space. It was a long spheroidal body, its dull silvery surface curving shinelessly in the bright lights that blazed upon it. Its surface was of a peculiarly mottled texture, as though it had been cut into millions of tiny facets by a master hand. It was a triumph of mechanical skill.

And in our minds was the thought: "It is the work of an old mad fool." Well, perhaps not in all our minds. Certainly not in Marjorie Lester's.

"It is a splendid vessel, my Spheroid," said Locke, the anger passing from his face and a glow of pride tinting his pale cheeks. "It must needs be splendid, it must needs be perfect, for the work it has to do. But come inside—you shall see every detail—I will convince every one of you. I am tired of doubts and sneers and polite good wishes. Oh, I know! . . . I know! I know how you all laugh at the mad scientist behind his back and smile hypocritically to his face! Oh yes, I know! But you shall see—you shall be made to understand."

"I'm not laughing behind your back, Austin," growled Chalcote. "I'm laughing right now. I tell you flatly that this thing is only a fool's toy. You are deluding yourself if you think you can make *this* fly."

"Come!" was Locke's only answer.

We followed him up a steep ladder to an opening in the Spheroid, an opening from which double sliding doors shot back, and presently stood in a cabin in the hold of the strange thing. This was a small apartment, furnished with a table and several chairs. Two thick glass windows broke the monotony of the dull, metallic walls, and two electric bulbs in the ceiling glowed at the snap of a switch.

Out of this apartment four doors opened.

"This one leads down to the storage place below," explained Locke. "There I have placed my accumulators for power, light and heat—my special new pattern, not yet patented. They could light and warm the vessel for several months. Then I keep there the tanks of compressed oxygen, distilled water, and other necessities for a long journey. I am not boasting, but I assure you that were the seven of us hermetically sealed up in this vessel, we could live comfortably for half a year."

"No doubt," said Chalcote. "I'm not skeptical there. I could do as much as that myself—if I had your money. It's the works I want to see. I want to know how you propose to cut loose from the old earth."

"This door," went on our host, as though the Professor had never spoken, "leads out into the stern chamber, which is fitted as a bedroom. The spiral stair, as you see, gives access to our 'loft,' one half of which contains our tinned and frozen meats, fruits, and liquids. The other half could also be made a sleeping place.

"And this door admits to the control chamber. There I have built the thoughts of my brain into fingers of steel. When I am ready, I shall sit in that chair, I shall move those delicate levers, the Spheroid will cease to have contact with surrounding matter, and the universe will recede from us at a speed unthinkable."

The chamber into which he ushered us had three windows, and the light from them fell on a small, circular table where a number of dials, such as are used on wireless receivers, gleamed.

That was all. There was no elaborate machinery to see, no imposing show of effort, no suggestion of power.

We scarcely knew what to say, how to hold our faces.

"There is nothing more, then?" asked Marjorie, and Chalcote grinned maliciously.

"Nothing more to be *seen*," responded Locke, sinking into the chair, his hands hovering lovingly over the dials. "Nothing. What you would like to see, which even I cannot see. I can only *feel*, through my knowledge and my delicate instruments, the power that lies hidden beneath my feet. As I have repeatedly told my scientific friends, the main idea has been in my mind ever since I began to think seriously. It is the details that have been my trouble all along. I have often despaired, but at last I have conquered. I have mastered gravitation. I can leave the earth when I will.

"It is all a matter of electronic arrangement. The outer skin of the Spheroid holds the secret. These switches control a high-tension circuit that is completed through the metal framework of the vessel. The electrons composing its atoms will then assume such abnormal orbits that all interaction between them and surrounding matter will cease. The Spheroid will be

isolated from the world of moving things. It will be left behind as the universe of stars rolls by.

"But, as the universe itself is curved, the Spheroid may in time come back to its starting point. When, I cannot say. I do not know the size of the universe. Its vast revolution may take a thousand billions of years—or a thousand billion times a thousand billion."

"And you would venture in this thing—assuming, of course, that you have figured everything O. K.," said the reporter, in a brave effort to remain courteous. "You would go in this thing, not even knowing whether you would ever return? What good would that be?"

"I shall leave full details of my work behind me," was the scientist's calm reply. "Other men, beginning where I have finished, may achieve greater things. At any rate they will know that I have gone, they will know that man can escape from the earth.

"But I am not ready yet. I am pursuing a line of investigation that promises to throw light on the problem of return."

"You are crazy, man—crazy!" cried Chalcote, rudely pushing his face close to Locke's. "Crazy, I tell you. It can't be done. It's just a mad dream, or you are hoaxing us. This may be a new sort of airship, or even a submarine, but it most certainly isn't going to travel in space. The thing is a sheer impossibility. Don't you dare to tell me—*me*, a man of international reputation—that your paltry radio knobs could send us out into the ether. Don't tell me that if you move this—and this——"

"First, all the doors must be closed, to complete the circuit, then, if I moved the dials——" said Locke.

"Close the doors, then, somebody," shouted the Professor. "I am going to settle this thing here and now. I am going to call your bluff, Austin."

"Help me down the steps," cried Dr. MacEarn. "This is most upsetting, and I am not feeling very well."

Roy Ormond helped her down gallantly.

No sooner were they safely out, than Chalcote pulled violently on the door levers, and the triple plates slammed heavily in place, locking all of us in. He then rushed to the control table and seized the dials in his big hands. Locke, deathly pale as with stark terror, struggled to push his friend away.

Marjorie Lester gave a sharp cry of fear, and Edith and I, sensing that something was wrong, went to her father's help, though hesitatingly. We did not understand what was happening, we did not like to interfere between those lifelong friends.

Friends? Chalcote's expression at that moment was a ferocious scowl of hate.

"I've had enough of your pretensions, Austin," he snarled. "I'm going to expose you. I'm going to put your claims to the test. I'm going to turn those knobs. And nothing will happen!"

It was a brief struggle. Though we all joined in to help the scientist, Chalcote was a strong man, with muscles of iron, and he had his way.

Slowly, resolutely, he twisted the dials.

CHAPTER III

In Space

THE fear, the anger, passed from Locke's face as though wiped off by a wet sponge.

"Nothing?" he cried. "Nothing? Look—look!"

We crowded to the near window, following the guidance of his pointing finger, as a tremulous shock vibrated through the vessel's framework. As suddenly as it came, the sense of motion passed, except for the feeling that our feet were pressing upon the floor.

Unable to speak for the wonder of it, we had a brief glimpse of the walls of the observatory crashing to ruin as we rose; then almost immediately we saw the country spread out below us like a ghostly map glittering with pin-points of light.

Then the night panorama fell away from us, to east and south we caught the dull flicker of the sea. We were conscious of a muffled roar of sound and a rapid rise of temperature. A cloud drifted under us, and when it passed we saw the whole earth as a great circle of black cut out of a brilliant sphere of stars.

There were thousands of stars, shining with a vividness no man had ever seen before; we saw them in their true and varied colors. The spasm of heat passed, and it grew intensely cold; the dull roar of sound sank to a thin, shrill scream.

"We are in space!" shouted Locke. "We are leaving the upper limits of our atmosphere. Now do you believe me, Chalcote?"

One moment we were protected by the earth's blanket of vapor; the next, our vessel was in that dreadful zone of airless ether in which the planets swim. The colored suns of the universe leapt into clear-cut glare on the inky background, and at the same instant it seemed to us as though the most stupendous uproar that ever assailed the ears of man were miraculously quenched.

"Now do you believe?" repeated Locke, his voice ringing through that appalling silence like thunder. "Now that this madman has hurled us into the abyss, now will you all believe my claim?"

"I have always believed in you," whispered Marjorie Lester. "But where are we going? When shall we stop? How shall we return?"

Where were we going? It was a terrible question. It brought back the stark horror to Locke's face, the horror forgotten in those first moments of unforeseen, of incredible triumph. He glanced at us helplessly, pitifully. Neither Edith nor I could find a word to say. Suddenly plunged into space from the smug complacency of a dinner table, the catastrophe locked our tongues.

It did not muzzle Professor Andrea Chalcote.

"Believe, Austin? Yes—I believe that you are very clever. You have stage-managed all this very well—oh, very well indeed. That was what you were so elated about, I guess. All this business of movement, and heat and cold, and stars and silence—bah! Faked, of course. Clever, yes. Give me your money and time, and I will make a vessel and arrange all the scenic accompaniments. I will provide the thrills and the illusions all right. I suppose, Austin, your next move will be to turn back your dials, go through all the sensations in reverse order, and land us back safely—or pretend to have done so. Then we poor deluded fools can tell everybody what it felt like to travel in space. You didn't reckon on Andrea Chalcote, though. I shall expose you the moment you let us out of this tin can!"

Edith's eyes sought mine. A wild hope flashed between us. What if Chalcote were right? Anything would be better than the awful reality. Marjorie intercepted our glance and shook her head. Locke's next words made our blood run cold.

"It doesn't matter in the least what *you* think, *now*, Andrea. You have flung us into the outer darkness. We have left the earth, perhaps forever. I don't know how to return. I do not know what to do."

"You don't know what to do?" snapped Chalcote. "You are helpless, are you? Well, I'm not. I know exactly what to do. I am going to open these doors, go down that ladder, find out how you have tricked us,

and tell the world. I've waited for such a moment as this, Austin Locke, since you took Mary from me. Waited for it, I tell you. I've seen through your game, and waited. I might have forgotten you if you had treated her properly, but you neglected her for this silly, crazy hobby of yours. You killed her with your madness. To-night, even before dinner, I felt in my bones that my hour had come. Out of my way! I am going to open those doors."

The two men glared at each other. They might have been alone, so completely they disregarded the rest of us. Locke made no effort to stay his enemy.

"You have been a consummate hypocrite all these years, Andrea," he said. "I admit that you have some reason for being bitter, though what is past is past. But you won't open those doors."

"Why not?" snapped the Professor, his hands on the levers.

"For two reasons. You dare not if you could. You know in your heart that we are now in space, that we have left the earth—probably forever—and that if you opened those doors the least amount, the inrush of the intense outer cold would kill all of us instantly. The second reason is that you cannot. The doors can be closed by anyone, but the opening lock is a letter combination. I've never written it down; it's in my head.

"It's your bluff I've called, Andrea. You believed in me all the time—you waited for an opportunity such as this—you did not care what happened to yourself—or to other people—so long as you could wreak your lifelong spleen on *me*. I ought to have been more awake; more cautious. But it is done now. We can't go back; we can't stop; we must go on we know not where. We have, perhaps, six or seven months to live. I hope you are satisfied with your work."

For a few painful moments the Professor fumbled with the levers that refused to move. Then he turned away and sank heavily into a chair, burying his face in his hands.

"You are right, Austin," he groaned. "I knew you were right, and my last doubt vanished when I saw your face as I seized the door levers. I am not sorry, even now, for what I have done—for you and for myself—but I ought to have remembered Edith and Marjorie and Mark. My hatred mastered me, I lost my head."

Somehow, dreadful as was our situation, dreadful as was this glimpse into the black abyss of a soul possessed, we felt sorry for the bowed man before us—the man whose scientific achievements had been honored by the world only yesterday.

Edith put our thought into words.

"It is a terrible position, father, but we must not make it worse. We are all imprisoned; we must be friends; we must forget the past and concentrate on the present. You are so clever, you will surely find a way back to earth—you and Professor Chalcote, working together."

"I see no way, child. This sudden plunge into the unknown has found me unready. There were so many things I wished to settle before I made the great attempt. At present we can do nothing—nothing."

"We can look, we can use our eyes, try to forget ourselves," cried Marjorie Lester, bravely. "Look! Look!"

In spite of the cold, nameless terror that gripped at our hearts, in spite of the disturbing surge of emotion that yet washed around us, we crowded at the windows.

The faint ring of luminosity circling the receding earth was now tinted with the prismatic colors of the rainbow. Behind it, the arms of the solar corona glowed, and then the red flame prominences around the sun's edge. Smaller and smaller grew the black heart in that circle of radiance, as the earth rushed away. At last we shot out of the earth's long shadow into full sunlight.

In an instant the corona vanished, a flood of brilliant light poured through the Spheroid and a glow of welcome warmth bathed our chilled bodies. We had left the earthly night, yet the sky remained everywhere of an inky blackness, in which the stars shone like pin-points of colored fire. The earth became a faint disc, a little orb of palest green.

For one moment Austin Locke forgot our peril in the ecstatic delight of a dreamer's triumph. He was uplifted, transfigured.

"Is it not worth all the labor, all the waiting, all the risk?" he cried. "To escape from the world and its cloudy covering—to see the sun and the stars as they really are—to be a free man of the universe—to be——"

The moment passed; realization overwhelmed him again.

To be here—to be helpless."

"But why can't you do anything?" asked Chalcote, with a return of his hostile manner. "Why can't you turn back your controls, de-charge your atoms, set your electrons swinging in their old orbits? Do that, and gravitation will pull us back."

"*You* ought to know better, Chalcote. Do you think I hadn't foreseen some such position as this? Don't you realize that you—and you alone—are responsible for our present peril?—that I had a great deal to do before I was ready for this tremendous adventure? I hoped to solve the problem of return, I was not without hope, but I should never have made this experiment except alone.

"Go back? Had I reversed the controls directly we started, the Spheroid would have been pulled down to earth and smashed like an empty egg-shell. Were I to do so now, we should be pulled, not to the earth, but into the sun. We should fall headlong into that fiery maelstrom of seething elements."

"Then—you can do nothing at all? We can only go on—and on—until our food and air and water give out—or until we crash into some obstacle, some planet, or meteor, or star——"

Locke inclined his head.

"At present—yes. Later, I may see some faint hope, some shadowy possibility of effort.

"I thought you said we should travel faster than light," said I. "Even a duffer like myself can see we are not doing that. We have been going over a quarter of an hour, and the earth is still a visible size. Even at the speed of light we should have been as far away as Mars in less than five minutes."

"It is difficult to make these matters plain to the ordinary, unscientific person," Locke replied, turning appealingly towards Chalcote. "*You* will understand, Andrea. And between ourselves, we had better keep up the fiction that the Spheroid is moving, just as we always talk of the sun rising and setting when we know very well it is the earth that turns. Besides, as disciples of Einstein, we must admit that one form of words is as good as another—all motion is relative—there is really nothing large, nothing small, nothing slow, nothing swift, save in reference to something else.

"When you started us, we did not suddenly stop. The tremendous momentum of our speed has not yet ceased. It will not be spent until we are far past the orbit of Mars. And also, I observe, you did not turn the knobs to the maximum position. I shall do that presently. A passing glimpse at the Red Planet will

be interesting. If my calculations are correct, we shall pass very near to it. You see, in my pocket-book, here, I had roughly worked out the probable route of the journey for every day in the year. Let us feast our eyes, whilst we may, on the glory of the heavens."

It may seem incredible that human beings, fixed as we were, could forget ourselves and our doom for an instant. Human nature is marvelously adaptable.

Through Locke's telescope, we gazed our fill. We were only city dwellers, scarcely ever taking any but the most casual interest in the immensities; we were now astonished and awed.

The many nebulae—spiral, lens shaped, globular—gleaming like ghosts amongst the starry multitude, were reminders that even in the outer void beyond our own Milky Way, other universes lived—at distances no mortal mind can conceive. The moons of Jupiter and the rings of Saturn seemed by contrast homely and comforting.

The larger stars were the most amazing. We gazed at Alpha Centauri, our sun's nearest neighbor. To the naked eye he appears one orange-tinted sun; in the glass we saw it as a pair of glowing worlds. They are twenty-two times further apart than is our earth from its parent, and the outer completes its circuit in eighty-five years.

Even more fascinating than these were the star clusters, and Locke's running fire of whispered comment. Listening to him, one could almost imagine, as one looked at a globular star swarm, that one could see its actual, spherical shape, could see that it was indeed composed of suns, but small suns, near together. Fancy conjured up a picture of planets circling round these little, gregarious suns—planets which enjoyed perpetual light—by day the glory of one star overpowering all the rest; by night the multi-colored blaze of a hundred neighboring suns.

"And now for the secret of the Red Planet," said Austin Locke, expectantly.

"I am almost glad that I came," Chalcote muttered.

Whatever might be our fate, the two savants were already beginning to enjoy their unique opportunities of scientific observation.

We three commoner mortals, herded together by our own windows, tried to feel calm, to appear brave.

CHAPTER IV

What We Saw on Mars

WE had left the earth far behind; we were approaching Mars, the ruddy planet that has exercised the minds of thinking men since the invention of the telescope. As we drew nearer, the familiar outlines, that every secondary schoolgirl ought to know, came into view. It was a fine day, summer in the southern hemisphere of the planet, whose melting solar snow-cap was tilted towards us. We saw the wide dark areas once called seas, and the amazing canals.

"They are no optical illusions—they are real waterways," said Locke, as we cried out in wonder at the sight of that geometric network of straight lines. "I have never had any doubt."

"Then you think Mars is inhabited?—that these canals are the work of intelligent beings?—that they have covered the planet with water-courses to utilize the melting snow of their polar regions?"

I tried to force an interest I scarcely felt. A strange feeling of physical discomfort—a premonition of what was to come—held me in thrall.

"Of course," grunted Chalcote. "The facts are obvious to all but fools. Only hide-bound pedants could hold out against Lowell's observations. But look there—on the equatorial belt—where the big canals join the Maraldi Sea!"

"Yes, yes!" cried Edith. "I see what the Professor means. It is a round cluster of black dots, perfectly circular."

"And its diameter," said Locke, after a hasty scribbling of figures in his notebook, "cannot be less than forty miles. It is a city—or an encampment."

"Or else," added Marjorie Lester, "a colony of civilized beavers!"

"How you anticipate my thoughts, dear Marjorie," said Locke, "It has often seemed to me that the type of life best suited to survive here would be the beaver type. What could be more suitable for beavers than a world like this? Our own beavers are wonderful engineers. Why may not the beavers on Mars, driven by necessity, have risen to a position here similar to that of man upon earth?

"Try and see all you can. We shall pass rather closely, but our speed is increasing. You will not have much time."

The red disc of the planet grew on the sky, swallowing the stars. It appeared to be rushing obliquely towards us. Its four tiny moons flitted erratically around it. Along most of the canals, at fairly regular intervals, we saw the circular clusters of black dots, and alongside each of them, curious spiral markings on the red, sandy soil.

Nearer yet we came, and now we saw that the equatorial belt was transversed by myriads of moving specks. They shot in all directions at terrific speed, crossing land and canals with equal indifference.

"They are aerial vessels!" cried Marjorie. "Mars is alive with motion, busy with life. Couldn't we stop here, Austin? Couldn't we land?"

Chalcote looked at our host with mute appeal. Edith and I hung upon his answer. Even to land on Mars, on this strange world of deserts and water-ways, would surely be better than plunging headlong into the unknown deeps beyond.

"I'm sorry," was Locke's reply. "We are going too fast. To clutch hold of gravitation suddenly, at this speed, would mean instant death. To reverse gradually would only throw us into the arms of Jupiter or back into the fiery maw of the sun. We must go on; I must have time to think, to plan.

"Use your eyes whilst you can. Mars will only be visible a few minutes longer. As soon as we are beyond him, I shall turn the dials to the extreme limit, cutting the Spheroid off from the last, lingering pull of the speeding universe. What will happen then I cannot tell you—I don't know. But we shall be clear of the Solar System and its immediate dangers."

Even as he spoke, the red planet passed, grew smaller, receded to a speck, became invisible. One brief glimpse we had of the night-side of Mars—a vision of a hemisphere belted with a thousand clusters of artificial light—and then a great planet circled with a treble halo flashed past us in the dark void. It was Saturn. Jupiter we never saw, nor Neptune.

"Mars is a battlefield, a scene of ceaseless struggle," murmured Locke, in his "platform" manner. "Life, dependent on water in a world that is rapidly drying up, is making a brave fight for existence. In the long run, Nature must win, but in the meantime Intellect is reveling in the conflict. Why not? Will not Man, in the days to come, when the earth must pass through the same fierce fight that has come upon Mars and his beavers in his Red Sandstone Period—will not Man

also imagine that he is holding his own? There will be much Pride of Intellect in the Days Before the End."

That was how Austin Locke theorized about Mars in the days before we knew the truth. How different is the reality!

So quickly was the Solar System leaving us now that already the sun was merely a brilliant star. Locke looked at us queerly.

"Are you all ready? I am going to cut off the last fragment of control. We cannot go back; who knows what may await us farther on? Chalcote, were I a religious man, I should say: God have mercy on your soul!"

Andrea Chalcote, sitting hunched miserably on his chair, buried his face in his hands. Edith, Marjorie and I, standing close together, waited silently, fearfully.

Locke's fingers moved over the controls, moved ever so slightly. He glanced once at the dials of his indicators and sat back, as though suddenly hopeless and weary.

We felt no shock, no sense of motion, but only an increase of the weight that seemed to be pressing our feet into the floor of the little chamber.

Then, without warning, the sun and the other stars vanished. The windows went grey, then black; silence and cold seized upon us.

According to Austin Locke, the universe was rushing away from us at a speed incalculable. We were adrift, unanchored, in unfathomable space, bound we knew not whither.

CHAPTER V

The Penalty of Speed

FOR several moments we three standing by the black window square clutched each other in the dark. Fear stilled our tongues, though our hearts throbbed like muffled drums. The reality and dangers of our mad adventure burned itself into my mind. From that moment I really believed—I *knew*. The horror of it—the unspeakable terror. And Edith was with us—she would suffer the same fearful fate as the others—Edith, the lovely being who was all the world to me.

I felt primitive, homicidal. If killing Andrea Chalcote would have taken us safely back to earth; I would have killed him there and then.

In my rage, just as Locke switched on the lamp over the table, I went over to the Professor and shook the hunched figure roughly.

What I said, what I intended to say or do, I have now no recollection. My voice was drowned in a swiftly passing roar of sound that tore fiercely at our eardrums. A glare of light dazzled us for an instant by its sudden brilliance. A wave of heat passed through us, starting the perspiration from our bodies as though it were a blast from an open furnace.

The noise, the blaze and the heat went as swiftly as they came—came again and went again; then the silence and the cold and the outer darkness settled down upon us.

I left Andrea, who had made no resistance to my frenzied attack, and faced Edith's father.

"Tell us the worst, Mr. Locke," I asked. "For your daughter's sake, if not for ours, you must tell us the worst—you must explain what has just happened."

The scientist put a hand on my shoulder.

"Try and keep calm, Mark. The girls are setting us a good example. I've told you the worst already. We can't go back, it would be madness to stop. I will talk about the probable future later on. Certainly I can explain what has just happened.

"The blackness of the sky, the disappearance of the stars, is simply the result of an excess of light. Just as there are sounds so high in pitch that we cannot hear them—that are, to us, silence—so we, moving relatively faster than light itself, receive so much of it upon our optic nerves that the result is darkness. We meet the waves of light so rapidly that they overlap and obliterate each other. Isn't that so, Andrea? I must confess I had not foreseen this effect. (Chalcote grunted an affirmative. 'You ought to have expected it, Austin').

"The noise and the heat were caused by our passage through a couple of meteor streams. We dissolved thousands of meteors into molten spray by the intense heat of collision.

"Already we are so far away from the Solar System that we are not likely to meet any more dense swarms. Of course, we shall always be going through clouds of cosmic dust—Space is full of loose material—and I am trusting to our constant friction with this floating stuff to keep us fairly warm. You see the temperature has gone up two degrees in ten minutes.

"I repeat we cannot do anything to help ourselves at present. Why not finish dinner? We were at the wine stage. I am the host still, remember: you are still my guests. Excuse me if I also have to be the waiter."

We jumped thankfully at the mundane suggestion.

Locke herded us away from his control room into the central chamber of the Spheroid, produced glasses and a bottle from a cupboard, and set them out on the little table.

He filled five glasses—his hands trembling somewhat, I fancied—and said, holding his own aloft:

"Allow me to propose a toast. To the ultimate success of our voyage!—may we some day return to earth!"

We drank in silence.

"It seems a mockery, Austin," grumbled Chalcote, setting down his glass. "It is merely whistling to keep up our courage. We all know very well that there is no hope for us—no hope at all. We are doomed to die in this accursed vessel that your mad genius has made."

"And that your mad, revengeful hatred started upon its unexpected journey," countered Locke. "I am not angry with you now, don't think it. Anger is mere folly in our position. You and I are scientists, remember that. We can utilize our unique opportunity to the best of our power, and we can also do the best we can for these other three, who have not had the benefit of a scientific and philosophical training."

"Thank goodness!" said Edith. "Don't worry about us, father. We shall get along somehow, I suppose, till—till the—the end. Let us go upstairs, Marjorie—that's where we two will have to sleep, isn't it?—and leave the men to talk things over without us. I want to lie down. I'm not—not feeling well."

Her lovely face was suddenly thin, drawn and pale. Marjorie too, looked worried and ill.

No sooner were they gone than Chalcote who had been walking about, subsided heavily into his chair.

"I couldn't have kept up much longer," he groaned. "I'm going all to pieces. For God's sake, Locke, tell me what's the matter with my internals?"

Austin Locke himself was walking about unsteadily.

A question was on my lips, but before I could speak I knew what they were suffering. I knew what was wrong with all of us. Possibly because I was young and in good athletic training, I was the last to feel that terrible sensation.

"Space-sickness!" I muttered feebly—and then I could say no more.

I will not dwell on the details of that awful malady. To have endured it, is to have endured a martyrdom; to recall it, is a nightmare.

If you have ever been sea-sick; if you have ever felt the absolute worthlessness of your life, have ever reached that stage of despair when you don't care an atom whether the ship goes down or not—I can tell you to multiply the wretchedness, the helpless horror of that feeling a hundred times if you wish to imagine what space-sickness is like. But unless you have actually experienced that malady, you will never know its utter misery.

Our bodies had been ruthlessly torn from their daily environment, freed from the comforting clutch of gravitation, and we were paying the penalty.

We did not think so at the time, but it was really the best thing that could have happened to people in our strange position.

Whilst the sickness lasted—and I, who suffered least, so the others said, did not recover for twelve hours—we recked nothing at all about what our future might be. The Spheroid might have burst open or gone off in flame for all we cared.

And when at length the distress passed, the relief was so great that it seemed a joy merely to be alive. Once it was over we felt that we could face steadily whatever fate might be in wait for us.

One by one we recovered, Chalcote being the last to come round, and then certain fresh considerations forced themselves upon our notice.

"I daresay you men have not thought about it at all," said Edith, when at last we sat down to our first collective meal some indefinite period later. "It is putting Marjorie and me into a perfectly frightful fix. In one word—Clothes!"

"Well, what about clothes?" I asked, with masculine obtuseness. "You both look extremely well-dressed. I have never seen more charming dinner gowns anywhere, I'm sure."

"Nor I," said the Professor, who had a most critical eye for feminine beauty.

Edith sniffed scornfully.

"Dinner gowns, my good men? What extremely useful wear for our present position. Just bring your scientific acumen to bear on the subject. Here we are, for weeks, perhaps for months, with nothing more to wear than a few yards of crêpe-de-Chine and silk and lace, no sleeves, not much back, rather skimpy skirts, thin slippers, one pair of stockings each, and a wrap. Nothing else! No change! Not a hat, not a coat, not a pair of shoes between us. Nothing else at all! Nothing to sleep in. Nothing to wear whilst we wash these flimsy things—even if we could wash them."

"You men are not much better in your dinner suits," said Marjorie. "But still, a tailored outfit is more durable than our rags. Your starched fronts will get crumpled and awkward, though, won't they?"

"I'm sorry," said Locke. "Once more, let me remind you that I am not responsible. I am quite as unprepared as the rest of you. I must admit, of course, that in outfitting my vessel I never thought of providing a wardrobe and a laundry. I have done everything else, I fancy, including a most efficient system of sanitation. Forgive me—we have got to face the facts.

"You girls must make the best of an awkward plight. You both look charming—eh, Andrea?—and there will be so little work to do here, so little need for exertion, that your dresses ought to last as long as—as long as you are likely to need them."

"What perfect frumps we shall be in a week!" cried Edith. "Mark, you'll never want to propose to me again—and I've got so used to it!"

"As long as they are likely to need them," repeated Chalcote. "Have you any idea how long that will be, Austin? I must confess that your air-renewing and ventilating arrangements are working well; the atmosphere is not at all stuffy."

"It will not get stuffy for weeks, Andrea. Before then—but I had better tell you the result of a few calculations I made just before we sat down to table. I will tell you just what hope we have—just what chance we have of ending this adventure otherwise than in death."

CHAPTER VI

One Chance in a Million

NEED I tell you how eagerly we settled ourselves to listen? After the dull, stoical despair, against which we had all braced ourselves in our several ways, a gleam of hope, however faint, was as the sight of water to thirsty desert travelers.

We no longer looked on Locke as a harmless monomaniac. We looked up to him as the arbiter of our destinies. No one else, nothing else, could help us. Even Andrea Chalcote hung upon his rival's words.

"I have already explained why we cannot go back, why we dare not stop," resumed Locke. "Accept the fact that at present we can only go on. But knowing, as I do, the exact spot from which we started, the precise moment of starting, and the direction of our flight, I can plot out our course. I can discover what part of the universe we shall occupy in, say, a little over a month from the start. I have done so. In about thirty-four days we shall be somewhere near a small star that is nearly one hundred light years distant from the earth."

"How many miles is that?" I queried, feebly.

"I could give you the figures. I could cover sheets of paper with the rows of necessary digits. Light travels at least one thousand, five hundred million miles per day. Work it out for yourselves—it will help you to pass the time. Well, as we are going—relatively, of course—a thousand times faster than light, we shall be near that distant sun in about one-tenth of a year, a little over one month.

"I won't confuse you with all my calculations. They are very rough and only approximate as yet, and I shall need days of close mathematical work on them, in which Andrea will have to help me, before I can exactly fix the date of our approach to the only star that lies in our direct path. But I want you to understand this. The star—of course it is a sun—may have planets circling round it. One or more of these planets may be habitable. If I can, by reversing my controls, "catch hold" of gravitation again at the right moment, we may be able to land on one of these planets.

"In other words, I hope to stop the Spheroid before it crashes into Star DX 1490. It is a slender hope, a desperate hazard, but it is all I can do. Everything depends on the accuracy of the calculations. The error of a tenth decimal point may mean the difference between certain death and the possibility of life."

"The possibility!" sneered Chalcote.

"I insist that it is a possibility, Andrea. The Star DX 1490 is a sun of similar type to our own."

"You can rely on me to help, of course," answered the Professor ungraciously. "It will pass the time. A month will seem ages. I don't know what these others will do. No parties, no theatres, no joy-rides."

Chalcote only voiced what was in all our minds. I

don't know, even now, how we weathered safely through those thirty-four days and kept our sanity. We played every game we knew, we told stories, read all the books Locke had on board, practised physical exercise, and slept all we possibly could.

It was a nerve-racking ordeal. Only three little chambers to live in, nothing to be seen from the windows, always the electric light. And though Locke assured us that the air apparatus was working perfectly, we had the constant fear, the constant feeling, that the atmosphere in the Spheroid was growing stale and stuffy.

Thrown together as we two were—for Marjorie Lester was often with the scientists, helping in their incessant calculations—it is no wonder that I became impatient with Edith. I proposed again and again. Why should we not be formally engaged, have done with all pretense?

I remember one occasion very distinctly. We were alone in the hold, and had got to the end of our distractions. Somehow I possessed myself of her hands.

"What's the use, Edith?" I asked, trying to draw her closer. "You know quite well how matters are between us. You know that I love you—that no other girl will ever be any good to me. And you like me, at least. Why can't we settle this business properly? Let me put this little ring on your finger, tell the others we are engaged, and . . . er . . . act accordingly. Then if we ever get back to earth, I shall feel sure of you. If we don't—well, I rather think I'll go out feeling happier."

"What's the use, Mark? You are so impatient. Why not wait till we know, for certain, what is going to happen? With all my admiration for dad and his wonderful achievements, I don't see any real hope for us. I don't believe that he does, right down in his heart. Besides, the others would think we were rather foolish, wouldn't they?"

"Does it matter much what they think, dear?"

She drew her hands from mine, drew herself away.

"Placed as we are, it matters a great deal to me, Mark. If we are never to escape from this horrible contraption, this flying mausoleum, as Marjorie calls it, an engagement would be foolish. We could never get married, and even if—even if we could—there is no privacy here, no married people's quarters. Oh, the thing is impossible, absurd; And *if* we do get back to earth, I must remember Bobby Anstruther—*he* is waiting for an answer, too."

She ended on a note of forced flippancy. Perhaps it was best.

"Bobby?" I rejoined. "That polished popinjay? Edith Locke, I thought better of you. But I have done. I have offered you my heart and hand, my bank balance, my all, and you spurn me. Never again shall I stretch my trouser knees before you!"

"Till next time, Mark." Then she leaned forward, and before I knew what was happening, had placed a little butterfly kiss, light as air, upon my forehead. "I'm glad you take it so well, my dear. It is better so."

There was a gleam of moisture in the troubled pansy eyes, and my heart leapt. Then she spoilt it all.

"That was how I was going to let Bobby down—gently. It was a sort of rehearsal. Even if we do get back to earth, Mark, I don't want to be married for years and years and years. I want to make my own life, be known for something I have done myself, before I surrender to any man. I want to be known for myself, like those women who write books and plays, travel in wild countries, or fly in airplanes."

"You will have traveled enough, soon," said I. "If that's all you want."

I know all this sounds trivial, banal. Most of our doings and discussions were little better; but what would you? What would *you* have done, in our strange position? Five people cooped up in a metallic vessel hanging motionless in the void, whilst the universe rushed by at a speed incredible; no sense of movement; no change from the monotony, the constant silence and darkness without.

Long before the month came to an end we were eagerly longing for the moment of trial—the moment when Locke would put his theories and his calculations to the test—the moment he would make his great experiment.

We didn't care much whether he succeeded or failed, whether he would hurl us to extinction or introduce us safely to a new and friendly world. All we cared for was the trial, the attempt. Anything would be better than the long misery of hopeless suspense.

At last the great moment came. The two scientists, their faces drawn and grave, announced that their labors were over. They had calculated our position and our relative speed to seventeen decimal places. They had made every possible allowance for error.

Locke seated himself once more at the control table, his fingers nervously caressing the dials. He moved them very slowly backwards.

There was no jar, no concussion; but it seemed as though weights had been lifted from our feet. We felt light as thistledown poised in air. I had a fancy that the Spheroid was turning and slipping sideways.

"The Spheroid is once more in the grip of surrounding matter," said Austin Locke. "It will move forward for some time yet, with its relative momentum, and should come to rest somewhere near the Star DX 1490. The instant we can see light, I shall be able to increase or check the speed at will. Keep your attention on the sky, and don't, if you value our slender chance of survival, distract me for a moment."

We turned to the shining, jet-black squares of the windows. The silence grew oppressive. An icy coldness seized us.

CHAPTER VII

The New Sun

FIVE—ten—fifteen—twenty minutes passed without a sign of change except the increasing cold. Austin Locke's face assumed a greyish pallor. Chalcote shivered, hunched his shoulders, smiled a sour smile.

"Nothing doing, eh, Austin? I'm not really surprised. Shouldn't wonder if I were right at first. All this hocus-pocus of silence and darkness—it's carrying the joke too far."

"Don't be a fool, Andrea," snapped Edith's father. "Remember our calculations. You know very well we must allow a margin for possible error. We must—ah! What did I tell you?—what did I tell you?"

The Spheroid twisted half-round, sending us all sprawling to the floor. A spasm of sickness, mercifully short, assailed us. And in the window squares, out of the inky blackness of outer space, suddenly sprang a thousand tiny dots of colored light. They quivered a moment, trembling like light reflected from the angles of a cut and shaken jelly, then shone bright and firm.

They were the stars.

And right before us one glorious bluish-white orb shone resplendent, with a visible disc. The others were stars only, as they have always been to the eyes of men; this was a sun, pale blue, glowing intensely in the void. Not far from it shone a faint speck of steady radiance.

"Sun DX 1490, and at least one planet!" cried Locke, in an ecstasy of delight. "I wonder—I wonder?"

We saw that his fingers were again busy with those tiny controls. Again he was bending the electrons to his will—loosing hold of the universe—clutching it again—hurling us nearer to the pale blue sun, checking us when we rushed forward too quickly.

Presently DX 1490 shone half as large as our own sun—a clear circle of refulgent color on the black, star-shotted curtain of Space. The planet was brighter, and several other tiny dots of light hung near their parent sun.

The temperature of the Spheroid rose as the glow from this new sun poured through the windows and heated its walls.

Many questions were ready to our lips, but we were dumb. Even Andrea Chalcote was silenced, the sneer fading from his lips.

Austin Locke reached forward and grasped the Professor's hand.

"You acted in malice, old enemy, but I am glad—glad! But for you I might never have seen this sight."

"We are not out of danger yet, Austin," Marjorie reminded him. "We do not know that we can land safely on that planet—or if we can live there if we land."

"I believe we can; I believe we shall," he answered. His old enthusiasm held him in its grip again. "So far, everything has happened as I hoped. It only remains for me to balance the opposing forces of gravitation and inertia. We are going straight to our goal."

If he had only known the truth—had known whose power it was that guided us, compelled us.

"Will it be long before we know the best or the worst, daddums?" asked Edith, consulting her vanity bag and instinctively tucking in a rebellious little curl above a dainty little ear.

"Hours and hours yet, children. I should advise you all to try and sleep till I want you. I had a long nap yesterday."

"You three do as you are told," said Chalcote. "I'm too interested, too amazed. I'm standing by the skipper."

Before we obeyed, we went to the windows once more. The starry sky was at least something familiar, something homelike and friendly after the long and hideous darkness. Yet it was strangely alien and unfamiliar. The old constellations were gone. The Milky Way yet stretched around us, a silent cincture of shining wonder, but all the old friends—Orion, the Bear, Andromeda, the Northern Crown, the Twins—all these were gone. We had moved so far from the earth that the stars fell into new and strange configurations. Our own sun was invisible, lost in the distance.

Overwhelmed, and suddenly very weary, we crept away to sleep like children.

When Chalcote roused us, and we joined the scientists in the control room, Locke was radiant.

"We are nearly there. It is even better than I hoped. The planet we are approaching is No. 7 in the DX 1490 system. Distance from its own sun, 170,000,000 miles. Diameter, 12,000 miles. Owing to its lesser density—gravitation due to its weight will be about the same as on our earth. Has an atmosphere with many clouds. We shall cross its orbit about an hour before it reaches the same point.

"And then?" we asked.

"A slight touch of one control, and the Spheroid will stop, will wait just long enough to let the planet overtake us gently. It is wonderful—wonderful!"

"It *is* wonderful," observed the Professor. "Altogether *too* wonderful. It's uncanny, miraculous, impossible!"

"It's actual," cried Locke. "One hour—we were just out in our reckoning by that one hour. One hour earlier, one hour later, and we should have flung into the fiery embrace of the blue sun.

"Austin Locke," muttered Chalcote, "your luck is supernatural."

Yet there was no element of luck in it at all.

Finally, after several delicate adjustments, the scientist got up and joined us at the windows.

Huge and glorious, larger and more vivid than our own sun, DX 1490 lay before us, and on our right hand came the growing bulk of planet No. 7.

We were now strung up to the limit of nervous tension, and as I looked down upon that enlarging disc towards which we now seemed to be falling headlong, I involuntarily braced myself against the shock of landing. A fall of hundreds of thousands of miles is no light affair.

Locke was now serenely confident. Science had done its work, done all that could be done; to fortuitous fate the issue remained. (So he thought).

"One minute more," he said at last, glancing at his watch. "In one minute we shall enter the planet's atmosphere."

We counted the seconds in heart-throbs. Would the minute never pass? How slowly the finger moved! How it raced!

The great circle of the planet, glowing with a curious golden tint, rushed up to meet us. It lay spread below us in oceans and continents, dimly veiled in cloud, then the Spheroid passed, with a long drawn shriek, into its upper air. The shriek rose to a roar of sound so fearful that we pressed our hands to our ears in speechless agony. The windows became cascades of streaming moisture in the fierce heat of our passage.

Then as the resistance of the air reduced our speed, the heat and the noise abated, and with a shock that threw us all to the floor, and sent every loose object clattering about the hold, the Spheroid came to rest.

To rest. Its long journey was over. It had brought us over a span of space that the mind can scarcely conceive. After its initial shock of landing, it settled down as composedly as though it lay in Locke's workshop on the distant earth.

Man had conquered the stars.

"But shall we be able to live now that we are here?" asked Edith.

We dared not look further ahead than that.

CHAPTER VIII

The Isle in the Golden Sea

AUSTIN LOCKE pointed to the forward window. The Spheroid lay upon its side, and bending athwart the glass, beating gently upon it, were the leafy branches of trees. Through an opening in the leafage we caught the glitter of distant water. Overhead, a few wisps of white cloud floated in a sky of palest azure.

"We have fallen into a Garden of Delight!" cried Edith.

"Or a verdant sepulchre," responded Chalcote, with a sort of sour joy in damping our spirits.

Locke, meanwhile, had busied himself with a small, double-doored cavity in the wall. From this he produced two small objects. One was a Fahrenheit thermometer; the other a tube of the planet's air.

"Seventy-five degrees," he said, and then, testing the air for respirability: "Quite breathable. Here's the combination for unlocking the big doors, Chalcote. Keep the card; I've another copy."

With a loud crash we flung the doors back, let down our rope ladder, and descended.

We stood on deliciously green and springy turf; we

inhaled the fresh breeze that rustled the foliage; we were like prisoners suddenly released from a dungeon. A brain wave came to me on the instant of touching the ground.

"We must have a name for this world," I said. "Why not name it after the first women who had set foot upon it Why not call it Edith—Marjorie—Ethmar?"

And Ethmar it was and is to us still.

Our first thought was exploration; our second, a meal on solid ground. We felt hungry for the first time for many weary days.

"Second thoughts are best," said Locke, "and we will call this meal supper. The sky is darkening, and sun DX 1490 is going down."

Our first picnic on this new world was enhaloed by romance. We found a level stretch of dry turf, brought out cushions and cloths, "spread our table in the wilderness." The great curve of our new sun, now tinged with purple, hung over the tree tops. A few stars twinkled in the darkening sky. The cries of strange birds and the familiar hum of insects were all around us.

By the time we had finished, the last segment of DX 1490 was below the horizon, the night sky was darkening, and the sky was alive with stars.

One thing only we needed to cajole us into the belief that we were back upon our own earth. There was no moon. Ethmar has no satellite. No silvery gleam of moonlight pierces her midnight woods, nor shines in shimmering beauty on her lakes and streams. No Queen of Night stirs the hearts of Ethmar men and maids to tender folly.

We thought it safer to sleep in the Spheroid that night. The wood around the clearing into which we had fallen was rather dense—it might shelter dangerous beasts. The girls went in to "tidy-up," whilst we three men took an after-supper walk. It was Locke's suggestion, and I could see that there was something on his mind.

"We must not go far, we must be sure of our way back," he said, as we entered the dark avenues of the wood. "I have brought you two out here to tell you something—you can break the bad news to the girls tomorrow."

"I know all about it," interjected Chalcote, "I have not kept my eyes shut. You are going to tell us that the Spheroid is useless now. The air-renewing apparatus is nearly exhausted."

"Yes," assented Locke. "We have landed without any serious inconvenience, but in another three or four days we should have been asphyxiated. Even if the Spheroid could be made to travel back, we could not go. We could not recharge the air cylinders without proper machinery. Here we are and here we must stay."

"In time, if we all worked, we could surely make what machinery we need?" I asked.

"In time—in time—perhaps in years, young lawyer," said Chalcote. "In time we might discover iron ore, dig it out, smelt it, cast or puddle it, shape it; make tools and lathes, forge it, turn it, use it—in time—oh yes, in time!"

We walked on in silence. The pleasure and glamour of our success had gone. We were on the point of turning back dejectedly when Locke gave a sharp cry.

"The planet is inhabited—inhabited by intelligent beings!"

We were on the edge of another grassy clearing. From the middle of the open space, reaching high above the trees, rose a tapering metallic column. From the top of it shone a flickering light of singular intensity. Going nearer, we saw that this light came from a pair of discs, on short, straight arms, that were rotating rapidly around the column.

The column seemed to be imbedded in the ground, rigid as a rock. Its substance was so hard and smooth that our knives could not even make a scratch upon it. It tapered without visible joint from base to summit. The rotating discs made a slight but rhythmic sound.

The two scientists were no less perplexed than myself. That this column was the work of intelligence we could not doubt, but its purpose was beyond us.

"We are just like savages seeing telegraph poles for the first time," said Locke.

"Not quite so bad as that, Austin," corrected Chalcote. "We do at least know enough to realize that this is brainy work. It may be an automatic signalling device or a sort of wireless, or even a collector of radio power from the ether. But we shan't find out any more by standing here and gaping, and it's getting infernally chilly."

We walked back in silence. The ladies had seen the flickering light on the column top, and were very curious, but of course we could tell them no more than we knew.

The long night seemed as though it would never end, and none of us found restful sleep possible. With the first gleam of coming dawn we were astir. It was a great moment—that first glimpse of sunrise on a strange world.

When the great disc of the sun—sun DX 1490—came up out of the gulf of light, the vague shadows took definite shape, and the fleeting clouds were painted with threads of gold and rose. The sky itself took on a glory of blue deeper than any eyes have seen on earth. The fierce disc of DX 1490 climbed above the sea of the tossing tree tops and the waiting world woke into life. Dew glistened on all the leaves, glittering like crystals on the glass, as the fresh cool air thrilled into genial warmth.

DX 1490 is so large and hot and brilliant, that even at the planet's great distance, the climate of Ethmar is mainly tropical.

The Professor consulted his watch.

"Sunset to sunrise was just fourteen hours and twenty-five minutes. The day here is nearly thirty hours long."

"If this happens to be one of the Equinoxes," corrected Marjorie. "That's one to me, Professor. Now for breakfast, and we have finished our preserved eggs. Shall we ever get any more fresh ones?"

"And after breakfast?" asked Edith. "I expect we shall go exploring—in these flimsy outfits, in these ridiculous shoes. We will have to be a Swiss Family Robinson, Mark, and you must make us sandals out of tree bark."

It was certainly an awkward problem. The girls were not fit to do any tramping in their thin dresses, cobwebby stockings and patent leather slippers, but they refused to be left behind.

"It's up to you three men to provide us with new wardrobes when we need them," said Marjorie, finally. "We *must* find out all we can about our position, and we will *not* be left here alone. If our poor feet get sore, you must carry us."

Locke and Chalcote groaned. I looked at Edith slyly.

"You would find me heavier than you thing, Mark. There's a lot of bone."

We first visited the clearing in which stood the mysterious column. Its light was extinguished, but the discs were still spinning. Who had lit it up at evening, and put it out at dawn? for what purpose were those discs spinning in that deserted spot? What kind of creature had built the column there?

Keeping the sun before us, we penetrated the forest. Traveling was not too difficult, though slow on account

of the ladies. Half-an-hour's trek brought us out of the trees, brought us out upon a margin of moist sand, to the shore of a sea.

A sea whose waves were billows of gold.

Yes. Clear away to the distant horizon it lay, tossing in hillocks of rich yellow. It was an ocean, gently lifting to the pulse of the solar tide, but an ocean of molten gold.

We splashed our hands in it, tasted it gingerly. It was cool to the touch, salt to the tongue. As much as one could hold in one's palm, or collect in tiny pools in the sand, was only slightly tinted, but in the mass, it shone in the bright rays of Sun DX 1490 as a vast crucible of fluid, coruscating bronze.

The effect of this yellow sea laving the green-wooded shore was indescribable.

"And whilst we are paddling," cried Marjorie, splashing merrily in the golden waves, "you two scientists might enlighten us on some of these wonders. Why is this water yellow, and what was the metal column for, and what sort of inhabitants are we likely to meet on Ethmar, and are we on a continent or only on an island?"

"All in good time, all in good time," replied Austin Locke. "The golden color of the sea is, of course, due to the presence of some element unknown on our earth. That is not really wonderful. Your last question is the most important. We ought to know where we are. When you are all ready again we had better follow the shore awhile."

"That big basalt rock jutting out, there, will do for a landmark," grunted Chalcote, struggling into his shoes. "The sooner we get going, the sooner we'll be back."

That seashore ramble ought to have been enjoyable. The heat was tempered by a delicious sea breeze, the gravitation of Ethmar is practically the same as that of Mother Earth. The sands were for the most part firm and dry. We had much to interest us. All forms of life were different from earthly plants and creatures, and yet all had similar organs, fulfilling similar functions. They were wonderfully different, wonderfuly the same.

Out to sea, where we continually glanced, there was no sign of life or movement save the rise and fall of the golden rollers, the drift of the gathering clouds.

After three hours of careful going, the girls began to limp.

"We had better rest here before we go back," said Locke.

"No need to go back," Chalcote muttered.

"No need? Why?"

"Because we have got back already. The sun was on our right when we started. He was on our left some time ago. He is on our right again now. And there's our basalt rock. We have walked right around. We are on a small island."

The fact struck us with the force of a blow between the eyes.

"Yes, Austin Locke," went on Professor Chalcote, bitterly, "this is where your genius has brought us. You have put us on a little island, lost in a strange sea on a strange world. It may be thousands of miles to the nearest mainland. We were lonely, isolated, out there in space in your precious steel vessel; now we are going to know what solitude really is."

CHAPTER IX

Catastrophe

YOU will perhaps wonder why we tolerated Professor Chalcote's acid words and thinly-veiled hostility. He had hurled us, unprepared, across the void of space, and it was no thinks to him that we were still alive. As Austin Locke's guest, as his supposed friend, as a man of science, of the world, of international repute, he had acted atrociously. Had we stayed on earth, not one of us but would have given him the cold shoulder.

Our position was unique, and we acted uniquely. We were forced to share his company; we had to make the best of it. And finally—and really this was the determining factor in our acceptance of him, of his taunts, his advice, his help—we all felt that in his inmost soul he had deeply repented. We felt that beneath his rugged exterior, in spite of all that he had done, in spite of the malice he had nursed so long, the grumpy Professor was rather a decent sort.

It sounds involved, but you see what I mean?

"Yes, we shall know what solitude is," Locke answered. "Our only hope is that our food will last out until some of the inhabitants of this world find us. And now we had better get back to the Spheroid as fast as we can. I don't like the look of the sky at all."

A great bank of cloud was driving up behind us, and the sea breeze began to lose its cooling freshness. A storm was coming; the air grew sultry and oppressive. Forgotten were our tired limbs and aching feet as we pressed back through the wood.

The romance of that green isle in the golden sea was already spoiled. Edith talked of building a raft, but it was only talk. Marjorie reminded us that we might not care for the native beings of this planet, even if we were lucky enough to cross that yellow ocean and find them.

We had traveled many million miles of uncharted darkness, yet we shrank from the prospect of risking our lives on an unknown sea.

The sky darkened rapidly as we hurried along, the heat grew stifling and far-off thunder growled as the lightning flickered on the horizon. We forced ourselves to greater speed, but the storm came faster. We were not half-way back when the first big drops came pattering on the leafage overhead.

We dashed on recklessly, tearing our clothes, scratching our hands in the undergrowth, but the way was not easy to find in the growing gloom. By the time we reached the metal column the storm was at its height.

I had never before seen such fierce lightning, nor heard such tremendous peals of thunder, nor staggered under such a weight of drenching rain. The sky was a continual blaze of blue and violet; the rolling crashes made a continuous roaring noise; the rain beat down the heavy branches of the trees, poured off the leaves in streamlets, churned the dusty earth at our feet into sticky clay.

The metal column stood unharmed through it all, the discs at its summit spinning rapidly.

At last, as the fiercest flash of all flamed out, we ran into our own clearing. The girls were almost sobbing in their game determination to keep up with us, though their ridiculous shoes were now cut to ribbons. Locke was puffing laboriously, and Chalcote seemed at the last gasp.

Came a roar that shook the ground, another flash, and then a rippling, tearing noise. Not a dozen yards from us, a gigantic tree was split from crown to root. The heavier portion fell with a terrific crash upon the Spheroid.

"It will break it!" cried Marjorie.

"No," shouted Locke, with a great effort. "No. I am not afraid. It is strong."

"It's going—it's going up!" screamed Edith, wildly; and forgetful of everything else we dashed forward.

The splintered tree had struck the Spheroid a deadly

blow. With a mighty clang, the heavy doors swung and closed. The vessel reeled under the impast, rolled down a slope of the ground, freed itself from the incubus of the heavy timber—and shot up into the air.

Locke and Chalcote clutched at it: I sprang for the swaying rope ladder. Their fingers slipped on the smooth, wet metal; the rope escaped me.

In a moment the Spheroid was out of our reach. It was visible for an instant in the flashing glare of the lightning, then vanished forever from our sight. A wailing shriek pierced the air, then died away.

We had tasted Adventure incredibly, and Suspense wellnigh unendurable: this was Catastrophe, stark and grim.

Heedless now of the rain or lightning, of the moist heat that steamed from the ground, or our tired limbs or tattered rags, we stood in stupefied silence.

We were lost, we were castaways on the confines of the universe.

Locke was the first to recover from the shock.

"We must not give way to panic," he said. "No doubt, when we have escaped from this island, I shall be able to resume my studies. I may be able to make another Spheroid, and one that can go back. Without machinery it will take a very long time—unless we get help from the inhabitants here but the task will be good for us. You must all help."

"We are still on this deserted island," scoffed Chalcote. "Our food won't last long."

"Edith's raft idea must be worked out, Andrea. And there must be a lot of edible fruits, roots and herbs. The lack of water is our worst difficulty. We have not seen even a tiny stream."

"What made the Spheroid leave us?" asked Edith.

"I ought to have fixed stronger locking screws to my controls. The shock of landing possibly strained them, and the falling tree jarred the dials round."

"And here we are—helpless," groaned the Professor.

Then conversation flagged, and even the sudden cessation of the storm, the clearing of the sky, the hot returning of the sun, failed to rouse us to eloquence.

We were in a sorry plight, and we stamped about the clearing, glumly, disconsolately, whilst the sunshine dried our steaming rags.

It was Marjorie Lester who set us going again, who shamed us into activity and a pretense of cheer.

"What people!" she cried. "What wonderful people we are! Two clever scientists, a budding legal light, an outdoor girl, and poor me. We have done what no human beings have ever done before; we have come safely through the most frightful perils; we have reached a beautiful new world; are we going to give way to despair now?

"What does it matter about the old Spheroid? Mr. Locke could not take us back to earth—except as a shelter it was useless here. We must get to work, we must make a boat or a raft, and go exploring. We must keep busy. There is plenty of wood, and we have the two hatchets. You men must begin at once, whilst Edith and I investigate the fruit and nut problem. I know something about botany, and I feel sure we'll find plenty to eat. Don't stand there open-eyed; get busy!"

She forced a merry laugh that sent us into action.

By nightfall we had the main timbers of a raft—of sorts—laid out on the nearest point of the shore, and after supper we went to sleep thoroughly tired out. Fifteen hours of daylight was a novelty to us then. We sheltered at the foot of the metal column. There was a sense of companionship in the sound of its spinning discs.

Sun DX 1490 was up before us, and a long and fatiguing day, in broiling heat, was begun and ended. The raft took on more shape, but it was a clumsy, ungainly affair, just tied together with lianes and other creepers. I doubt if it would have carried us far, and it would have certainly gone to pieces in the first squall.

We settled down as well as we could to face the darkness of the third night. The scene of physical rest after the day's work was very pleasant, and we spoke cheerily, but secretly we were in the grip of despair. I know that I felt the shadow of death to be very near us.

I lay looking up at the stars, and the rotating discs of the column for a long time.

It seemed but a moment after I dozed off when Locke woke me, clutching my arm. A rushing noise filled my ears.

"Over there—coming towards us—falling!" he cried.

Chalcote and the girls were already awake.

A strange shape was sweeping swiftly down the dark sky. An intense light surrounded it.

"It's an airplane," Edith cried. "And what a funny one! It glides on its propeller!"

The machine had four broad arms beneath it, like the arms of a great cross, and these were rotating with tremendous velocity. From the axis of rotation a short tower rose, and on the top of the tower glowed a globe of light.

It sank towards us in a long descent, the rushing noise fading as it came nearer.

By the time we had grasped these details the vessel was in the clearing. It came to rest with one broad arm not a dozen feet from the column.

Here was evidence that our journey was not to be in vain, that we were not to be marooned on this desolate island in the yellow sea. If these beings who could navigate the air proved at all friendly . . .? That they had landed carefully, had avoided falling upon us, was at any rate hopeful.

We went gingerly towards the strange vessel, passing between two of the flat metallic blades resting on the turf. From an opening in the tower, a door was being slowly withdrawn.

"Now for it," muttered Chalcote. "Now to test all our theories. Great God! What an opportunity! What a good thing we came!"

What we expected to see, I cannot say. For my own part, primed as my mind was with the pseudo-scientific romances of Verne, Doyle and Wells, I thought nothing would surprise me. Had a cuttle-fish, or a giant centipede, or even an intelligent frog, appeared in the doorway, I should not have registered astonishment.

Nothing could have amazed us so much as did the being who actually presented himself. Nothing we had read, thought, imagined, had prepared us for the reality.

We saw a man about six feet in height. He was dressed in a short robe of brown material held in at the waist by a girdle, had sandals on his feet, and a sort of turban on his head. His arms and legs were bare. He stood regarding us with a re-assuring smile.

We were dumb before this wonder.

It was a curious, a rather painful silence.

CHAPTER X

We Go to the House of Zeus

I SUPPOSE our faces told our visitor quite as much of our feelings as any words could have done just then. His features showed a smiling friendliness, intermingled with a sort of recognition. It seemed to me that he knew all about us.

"He looks as majestic as old Zeus, the Lord of the Greek Olympus," whispered Marjorie Lester; and Zeus he was to us ever after.

We saw a man about six feet in height. He was dressed in a short robe of brown material held in at the waist by a girdle and wore a sort of turban on his head. He stood regarding us with a reassuring smile.

A few moments of this awkward silence, and he stepped from the doorway of the air-vessel.

"Great Scott! He can float—he can levitate!" ejaculated Chalcote.

It was quite six feet from the threshold of the door in the tower to the green turf. Zeus, without any perceptible effort, stepped into the air and sank to the ground.

Approaching us, he placed his right hand on each of our shoulders in turn, with a glance that showed us that this was the mode of greeting friends on Ethmar. And then, with an unmistakable gesture, he indicated that we were to go back with him into the airship.

At the foot of the tower he rose easily in the air, plainly expecting us to follow.

His momentary perplexity quickly gave way to a look of understanding. He descended, took Edith's hands in his, smiled benignly—and floated up with her.

"It's wonderful, it's glorious!" cried Edith. "It's just like floating in one's dreams. Don't be afraid."

Helping us one by one, Zeus lifted us all into the tower. Though he seemed to do it easily, he breathed quickly, as from a severe effort.

"A clear case of direct mental control over matter," said Locke. "They are in advance of us."

Entering the dark tower, a faint odor of oil and the soft purr of smooth running machinery met us. Once within, the gloom turned to light. The metallic walls, opaque from outside, were transparent from within, and the whole surrounding scene was visible as though viewed through clear glass.

The door closed, the machinery began to spin with a deeper note, a strange hissing came from some unseen exhaust, and we rose from the ground. The four great arms beneath us swept round with terrific speed. The little island fell away; we were gliding over the golden sea, under the unfamiliar stars.

The airship tower was divided into two stories. From the centre of the floor, a net-guarded, spinning shaft came from the propeller and rose to the upper room. Peering upwards through the circular opening, we caught glimpses of bright cranks and wheels, and men busy amongst them.

"The mechanics up there are not of the same class as Zeus," said Chalcote. "They are smaller—altogether different. And the motive power—well, if it's all up there, this big vessel is being driven by a toy engine."

As we afterwards learned, we were then flying at over 300 miles per hour, and our fuel was radio-energy. The inhabitants of Ethmar had discovered the secret of harnessing atomic power. The hissing exhaust we heard was caused by the escape of the billions of released electrons that could not be used. For every electron whose force was captured, millions were wasted. Yet sufficient power to carry that airship around the planet ten times was contained in a leaden box whose outside dimensions were one inch by two by two.

Our conversation, somewhat restrained by the presence of our silent host, was not remarkably brilliant. Our minds were in a state of chaos. We had not expected to find human beings here.

"It's a fact, and yet it's impossible," said Marjorie. Either evolution has taken the same course, gone through the same stages, reached the same result, on every habitable world in the universe—and that is incredible or humanity has been evolved here only besides our earth, and out of all the thousands of worlds on which we might have landed, we have landed on this one. What do you think, Mr. Locke?"

The scientist shook his head. The man who had conquered gravitation was up against a mystery whose eventual explanation beggars the wildest dreams of the human imagination.

"Frankly, I'm at a loss," he said. "Either of your theories would account for the fact, but both are impossible ideas. And I cannot see any other reasonable solution."

Yet there was a third alternative, an entirely different, an utterly unexpected explanation.

We had been flying over the sea for a couple of hours when the sky ahead began to glow as with a distant fire. Sun DX 1490 was rising. Zeus switched off the airship's light, and in the gray dawning we waited for the day. It came in a burst of blue and golden glory over the golden sea, and we saw that we were approaching land.

The speed of the vessel slackened as we neared the shore. The great revolving arms slowed down until we could count their revolutions. The golden sea fell behind, a strip of land appeared, and beyond it, the gleam of buildings amongst trees.

"A city!" cried Edith. "And a river! And streets and avenues! And—and motor cars!"

"This is too much," growled Chalcote.

"Look for yourself, then," said Locke. "Why be surprised? Human beings, such as ourselves, such as these, must have everywhere much the same needs and evolved much the same appliances."

There was no doubt about it. Along the broad and leafy avenues of the city hundreds of little cars were gliding at various speeds. Yet the city seemed half-asleep.

Suddenly the propeller stopped and the vessel sank to the ground. It came to rest on a wide lawn bordered on all sides but one by gigantic cactus trees. On that side stood a circular building pillared with gleaming marble columns.

The door of the vessel opened and Zeus motioned us to descend. It was a more or less awkward jump for me, but the others mutely begged help. Our host politely gave them his hands and brought them gently down. With a compelling gesture he led us to the house.

The path that swept up to the portico was fringed with brilliantly colored flower-bedding, the entrance was hung with baskets of gorgeous blooms, the air was full of the sweet songs of birds.

"We are awful frumps to face anybody," complained Edith, smoothing out her tattered flimsy dress, and, with Marjorie, lagging behind us.

As in a dream, we followed Zeus down a lofty corridor, and on to a great room that was set out with tables bearing fruit and flowers and dishes of solid food. In an alcove beyond, a fountain of milky water splashed into an alabaster bowl. Imitating Zeus, we washed in the fountain. The water was cleansing and cooling, and most exquisitely perfumed.

We held our dripping hands in quest of towels, but our host merely waved us to a funnel set in the wall, and pressed a switch. A breath of hot, dry air flowed over us, and a flood of violet light gave our pale skins glowing color.

As we turned away, clean and re-invigorated, a number of men, dressed exactly like Zeus, came silently into the room. They greeted us with the laying of hands on shoulders, gave us smiles of welcome, pointed to the tables, and silently filed out. Zeus lingered a moment, repeated their gestures, then followed them.

"I'm certainly peekish," said Chalcote, "and even if these slabs of colored stuff are synthetic foods, just chemical vitamins and proteids, I'm for experimenting."

We all experimented. Everything was strange to our taste, and yet pleasant.

"I've brought my indigestion tablets," said Locke, tapping his waistcoat pocket, "but somehow I don't

think I'll need them. And now—what next?"

Full of wonder and expectation, we strolled round the big apartment.

The decorative scheme was superbly severe, reminiscent of Greek art in its halcyon period. The only thing that detracted from the classic atmosphere were a number of pictures sunk in deep panels in the walls. They were all in duplicate, with binocular glasses before them.

"Photographs—in life colors—stereoscopically fixed," was the Professor's comment. "Wonderful, and yet not wonderful. No doubt painting did its best here, once, but it has been superseded by a camera that reproduces Nature in Nature's own colors and Nature's true relief."

Looking at these views was like looking through windows at real scenes. Most of them were landscapes of great beauty, but in all of them there were human figures. In many there seemed to be two races of men. One race was tall and commanding, the lords of power; the others were the humble hewers of wood and drawers of water.

Had the great labor problem been solved here by the evolution of humanity into two different types?

Some of the views showed only the shorter race, and in several the landscapes were unlike anything we had imagined.

In one scene a pair of suns, a blue and a gold, shone in the same sky; in another, three moons gleamed between drifting clouds; in a third, the sky was lit by a number of stars so big and brilliant, that many of them produced visible shadows.

The view which held us most was a weird, desolate, mountain scene, with a glacier descending the ice-bound slopes. A river issued from the glacier, and men in rough skins were spearing fish in the black water. With my first glance I thought it strangely familiar; with a closer look I knew it.

Marjorie Lester took the words out of my mouth.

"It's just like looking at Mont Blanc, from the heights above Chamonix! Every outline is the same, though on a larger scale, and the glacier goes further down the valley. It might be a photograph taken on the spot!"

"Why not?" asked Locke. "There are other pictures here that have not been taken on this planet. We can only suppose that these people have mastered the secret of space-travelling, and that these are photographs brought back from their various journeys. They must have visited the earth centuries ago, when the Alps were larger and men were yet barbarous. This is no doubt a photograph of Mont Blanc."

"But why has life evolved the same sort of human beings on all these different worlds?" mused Chalcote. "It gets me. It seems a fact, and yet it's impossible—sheerly impossible."

Before anyone else could speak, Zeus came back. He beckoned to us to follow him, and presently we found ourselves in a large, semi-circular room with a white wall-space on the flat side. Rows of substantial, hard, plain chairs filled the rising tiers of seats.

"The movies, the pictures!" cried Edith. "Isn't this homelike—and isn't it just thrilling?"

CHAPTER XI

Where Men Are as Gods

EXCEPTING for Zeus and ourselves the great room was empty. Obediently we took seats in the front row and gazed in expectancy at the white wall. Our host smiled comprehendingly and went to a black-panelled switchboard.

There was a tiny green flash, the lights went dim and the screen began to glow as with inner fire. A moment later a living, moving scene grew on the smooth surface. We seemed to be looking down upon a waving mass of foliage bathed in strange sunlight.

"Look!—Look!" burst from Marjorie. "It's a cinema picture of ourselves!"

Something large and gray was falling into the clearing. Swiftly as it came, we recognized the Spheroid. We saw it land, saw it settle down. We saw the door open, saw ourselves emerge. It was a queer sensation. We saw our wanderings, the succession of day and night, the storm, the loss of the Spheroid, the arrival of the air vessel, and our rescue from the island.

"Nothing so extraordinary in all this," said Chalcote. "Merely a cinema record, reproduced with wonderfully natural coloring."

"But from what position were the photographs taken?" asked Edith.

"From the revolving discs on the metal column," answered her father, quietly. "I saw several similar columns as we neared the city. What a perfect system of news—actual, instantaneous news—these columns must give if they are fixed all over the planet, and transmit all they see, either by wire or wireless. I expect our host can look at any part of Ethmar he wants, either at the present moment or in the past. I will ask him."

With a few pencil strokes on the leaf of a pocket-book, Locke sketched several columns and a square sheet. The columns he joined by dotted lines to the white square. Zeus nodded at once in perfect understanding, and going to the switchboard, put on another scene.

This time it was the city itself we saw. We saw it brilliant with artificial light, the streets thronged with vehicles, the gorgeous gardens gay with people. In the distance a towering square column rose to the sky, and from the top of it a cloud of gray vapor rose. As we watched, this gray cloud thinned and vanished, the traffic ceased, and when DX 1490 arose in splendor the city had become as a city of the dead. Then the airship appeared, we saw ourselves descend and passing into the house of Zeus.

Then more pictures of Ethmar life passed before us. In all the night scenes there was active life; in all the day scenes there was rest and the glare of light on deserted streets. We saw more than we had power to remember or intelligence to comprehend.

At last Zeus led us out into a corridor with a long array of open doors. In each little apartment was a tiny bed and various bedroom fittings in gleaming white. He indicated plainly that five of these were at our disposal.

"I'm tired enough, but it seems funny to go to bed just after sunrise," said Edith.

"Sensible people, Ethmarians," said Locke, from the doorway of his cubicle. "Good morning, everybody."

I slept wonderfully well; as, indeed, I did during almost the whole of our stay on Ethmar. The sleeping rooms were psychologically charged with drowsy influence, as well as with vitalizing and ionized air. I woke with a merry peal of music ringing in my ears. So lively was it, I felt compelled to be up and astir.

No sooner was I out in the corridor than I was joined by the others. We were all refreshed and eager, anxious to know "what next?"

Zeus arrived within a few minutes, bringing with him an Ethmar lady. To our great relief, she at once took charge of the girls, shepherding them to another part of the house.

"They'll get decently dressed now, perhaps," grunted Chalcote. "Ditto here, if we can make our friend understand."

After a little trouble we did make Zeus understand, and presently we were back in the dining-hall, respectably attired in correct Ethmarian garb. The loose, short robes were fairly comfortable, the turbans were not so bad, and the sandals—well—we said nothing much, but hoped they would feel better in time.

"Makes one ashamed of one's corns and bunions," said Locke, ruefully. "And as to the bare legs—not even a pair of socks—it's a good thing the climate is so warm."

"I feel like a wild Highlander," was Chalcote's comment, as he gazed down at his stumpy and lumpy extremities. "I expect these folks have gone the whole hog in the simple life and high-brow line. Minimum dress, sun-ray and fresh air on the body, vegetarianism, water drinking, and so on."

We were about to make some caustic remarks on his appearance, when the ladies joined us.

"Now what do you think?" asked Marjorie, sweeping us a low bow as they came in. "We are *dressed*. We are once more in the fashion—in the very latest fashion of this planet. How do we look? Say something, somebody!"

"I think you look charming, Edith," said I. "Both of you," I hastened to add. "Your robes are decidedly chic, your sandals are very pretty, your turbans might have come out of Bond street, they are so plain and close fitting; as for your arms and legs, I could reach poetic heights of eloquence if you cared to listen!"

"The Ethmarian women have been very good to us," rejoined Edith, cuttingly. "They believe, as the women of earth are just beginning to believe, that one's limbs, if healthy and undeformed, are not to be hidden nor to be ashamed of. I am far more comfortable now than I have been since we left home. And another thing we've found—every head on Ethmar, male and female, is bobbed!"

In the midst of our badinage other people came in, and we sat down to breakfast (or was it supper?) in the cool glow of sunset. There were fourteen at the table; five men, four women, and ourselves. We were waited upon by three men of the servant race.

We were glad when the meal was over. The conversation was undoubtedly brilliant, our hosts were all gravely polite, the synthetic foods were enjoyable—but we were just five dumb and ignorant dummies.

Breakfast over, Zeus took charge of us again. A silent lift whisked us to the flat top of the great house just in time to see DX 1490 sink below the horizon. Night fell with tropic suddenness, and at the same instant the city leapt into vivid light and life.

A forest of tall columns bearing dazzling lamps, poured a flood of brilliance into every quarter of the city. Towering high above the lightning columns were twelve great shafts bearing the revolving discs of the picture telegraph. From the lofty chimney came a soaring cloud of vapor. People and motor cars appeared in the streets; air vessels rose from hundreds of hangars.

One vessel came and floated by our roof, putting out a gangway. Zeus led us aboard, and we were taken across the city to another magnificent building. It had a great dome, with a revolving slit.

"An observatory!" cried Marjorie. "Now you will feel at home, Aust . . . Mr. Locke."

"Shall I?" responded the scientist, ruefully, as we passed within. The place seemed to me a chaos of instruments. Its walls were covered with maps and diagrams. About twenty men and women sat at tables, busy with such complex calculations, such staggering rows of figures, that Locke and Chalcote shuddered and sighed as they looked.

At one table somewhat apart from the rest, a woman stood working, deftly drawing geometric figures and checking measurements on a large scale map. Once one's eyes had rested upon her, one could scarcely look elsewhere, so lovely she was, so perfect of face and figure, so radiant with fascinating personality.

Zeus led us up to her, and introduced us in dumb show, with the exception of mentioning her name.

He called her Errangia. We have never forgotten it; we shall never forget it; we shall never forget her. Even now I sometimes wake in the dark hours and try to think that Errangia still lives . . .

As Zeus pronounced her name, their eyes met, and some secret message passed between them.

Errangia was taller than the average earthly woman, but regal, queerly, with her tallness. Her features were clear-cut, classic, perfect in contour; her skin was of exquisite smoothness, blooming with the glow of vitality, of perfect health. Her hair was a mass of sunny curls, as golden as the Ethmar seas. Her loveliness surpassed all our earthly standards.

She smiled graciously at us—a smile that put us all at our ease instantly—and then proceeded, by means of signs that her beauty made wonderfully eloquent, to explain the map upon the table.

It was a star map of marvelously intricate detail. A thin, dark line was drawn from a star near the center, to another star about seven inches away. We gathered that this line represented the path of our journey. Our doubts were settled by a map of our own Solar System, on which the Earth was marked with a special sign.

"Incredible as it seems, we have got to believe it," said Austin Locke, with a sigh. "Not only did these people, with their picture telegraph, see our landing, but they know what system, even what planet, we have come from. It is utterly beyond my comprehension."

His gaze rested on Errangia's lovely profile as he spoke, and Marjorie Lester made a petulant, impatient movement.

Zeus, who had been watching both of them with a puzzled expression on his fine features, turned away suddenly to consult a dial on the wall, a clock with strangely familiar figures, and spoke to Errangia and the others. Everyone left their work, and followed him out through a wide doorway into a large, sanded area open to the sky.

We five strangers stopped in the doorway, wondering. The great bare area was lit by seven lamps, and seven intensely powerful beams of light projected vertically upwards into the dark night. Our hosts stood around the sides of the area, gazing upwards.

"What do they expect?" asked Edith, in an awed voice.

A low cry came from Errangia; a queer, hissing sound from the sky.

A dark shape was falling rapidly toward us. The hissing sound became a scream, the scream shrilled in our ears a moment, and ceased. The shape slackened speed, sinking down so gently on the sand that one could scarcely note the moment of impact.

It was a spherical vessel, a perfect globe, without opening, window or line upon its smooth gray surface.

"It is a space-ship!" cried Marjorie. "These must be space travelers like ourselves, but they were expected. Our hosts have come out to welcome them. See! It's unscrewing!"

A portion of the globe was now rapidly rotating, projecting from the surface, and revealing the spiral threads of a bright screw. Very quickly this screwed section fell out, and the inmates of the vessel emerged, floating to the ground.

Our hosts received them with the laying of hands on shoulders and seemed particularly pleased to meet

them. Feeling out of place, we went back into the empty observatory. It was Marjorie Lester who spoke, putting our thoughts into a few words.

"We are children in a world where men are gods!"

CHAPTER XII

Nights of Learning

I MUST pass briefly over the next few weeks of our new life on this distant wonder-world. Of how wonderful, how vital and important a world it was, we had even yet no idea.

Already, so short a time after our miraculous landing on Ethmar, some of the strangeness, the awkwardness, had begun to wear off. Human nature, as I may already have remarked, is marvelously adaptable. Already several personal factors were beginning to loom larger than the cosmic facts.

My own love and longing for Edith was growing more insistent. It seemed to me that now we five earthly beings were stranded on a world of super-intelligences, we should draw closer together. Edith did not see it in the same light. She drew herself aloof, appeared to regard our previous attraction as something of the past, something belonging solely to our earth-life, and altogether out of place on Ethmar.

She studied the Ethmarians keenly, and found a sort of perverse delight in the apparent absence of flaunted sex appeal, of open love-making.

"The women of Ethmar," she said, one day, "are really living their own lives. They are really independent, self-respecting beings, who have other aims in life than to attract men."

"You were rather good at it, Edie," remarked her father, dryly. "Your dresses cost me a pretty penny."

"And you knew how to vamp when you liked, little girl," croaked Chalcote. "Oh, yes; I've watched you!"

"You must admit, Professor," retorted Edith, with a toss of her lovely head, 'that the ladies on this planet have not yet shown any signs of response to your deferential gallantries. Oh, yes; I've watched you! And you, too, daddy. The fair Errangia has got you both on toast. And she is supremely indifferent, doesn't dress a bit better than anyone else, though she is the most beautiful person I have ever seen. If she looks at one of us more interestedly than the others, it's you, Mark. Wouldn't it be funny if she 'fell for you,' as they say in the pictures? I suppose you wouldn't glance at little me again!"

She spoke lightly, but I thought I caught a catch in her voice.

"Why discuss the most wonderful being we have ever met, in this flippant manner?" asked Austin Locke, severely, with a heat I didn't expect, a heat of resentment that made Marjorie Lester wince. "Let me tell you, instead, a few things Chalcote and I have discovered."

"Go on, daddy; no need to get ruffled," said Edith, soothingly. "We know you like to talk when you've got a topic."

"Well, for one thing, we have learned that these people sleep in the daytime, and work and study at night. They are an astronomical race and make great use of the night sky. It is a good arrangement from that point of view, though I don't see why astrophysics should be their sole absorbing study. The nights are certainly cool and pleasant, and they neither miss the charm of sunrise nor the glory of sunset.

"As far as we can gather, they have no coinage nor any visible medium of exchange. But what would a Hottentot in London know of our cheques and bankers' drafts? Their weights and measures are all on the duodecimal system. Everything goes in twelves, and it is the nearest to a perfect system of numeration. It is a simply owing to our unfortunate ten fingers that we have not adopted it. Here they have risen above counting their fingers.

"The picture telegraph you have seen at work. It covers the whole of the planet, and the past and present happenings at any spot are always available for everyone.

"Most houses seem to be occupied, not by families, but by groups of individuals who are engaged in similar research. No wonder they have so much time to devote to this sort of work, for all the hard, physical labor is shouldered by the subject race. *Their* existence is a complete mystery.

"In chemistry, the lords of Ethmar have gone far. They make synthetic foods, they transmute the elements as they please. They have tapped the power of the atom, and released radio energy drives all their vessels and engines. At first I was surprised to see the great chimney yonder smoking every night—I know now that the cloud we see is not smoke, but the surplus gases given off in the process of liberating atomic force.

"Their telescopes are beyond me. I have seen miracles. They showed me the planets of a star, which star one cannot see with the naked eye.

"One thing we have learned, and which you will do well to remember, is this: we are absolutely at the mercy of these people. We must do just what they wish us to do. In spite of the genial kindness of our hosts, they are, in my opinion, pitiless. They are studying us as scientists study animals, and if we prove awkward or in any way annoying to them, they will have no hesitation in—in getting rid of us."

"Even the lovely Errangia?" asked Edith. "I can't believe it, daddy. They are treating us too well. We don't understand them, that's all. When we have learned of their language to talk freely, we shall find that they are not so very different from ourselves. I have 'made eyes' at one or two sedate students—and they are not so stiff and backward as you might think!"

The lack of a common tongue was a great drawback. We had picked up a few names, a few elementary phrases, but though the language was evidently scientifically constructed, our progress was painfully slow. We did not expect to reach fluency for some months.

We learned in one night.

For a whole day after the talk just recorded, Locke disappeared. We couldn't find him anywhere, in the house or in the gardens, and everyone met our clumsy questionings with bland smiles that would have done credit to Chinamen. We began to feel anxious, to wonder whether he had offended some of them and they had . . . well, we didn't like to put the thought into words. Edith grew worried, whilst as the long night of that day went on, Marjorie Lester went about silent and dull-eyed.

Next evening, as we were watching from the housetop the ever fascinating sight of the city's dimming lights and stilling traffic at the approach of dawn, Marjorie nearly broke down.

"Can we do nothing, Mark?" she asked me, in a low voice. "I have tried, but I cannot make any of them understand what I mean. Or if they do understand, they pretend not to, which makes it worse. Whatever can have happened to Austin? Oh, I've no false shame, no silly pride. It will kill me if they have. . . . If they must take one of us, why didn't they take old Chalcote? Don't you think, if we made a united effort, we could force them to tell us something? Zeus, I am sure, is not hostile to us."

"That's a ray of hope," said I. "We haven't seen

Zeus all day, either. They may be together somewhere."

"They *are* together—and they are here!" cried Edith, suddenly. "And they are talking! What does it mean? What has happened, father?"

Our host and Locke had floated up from the gardens, hand in hand, and as they approached us they were talking quickly, earnestly, with eager pleasure. Talking? In what language? We could scarcely believe our eyes and ears.

"What has happened, what has made you look so ill, Austin?" asked Marjorie, running forward anxiously.

"Only this, my dears," replied Locke, laying his hands on the girls' shoulders, "only this. Thirty hours ago I was as ignorant as you are. Now I can speak Ethmarian with the accuracy of a native. I have completely mastered the language."

Despite his quiet elation, his cheerfulness, it was evident that Edith's father had suffered a severe strain of some sort. Great rings of darkness encircled his eyes, his eyeballs were bloodshot, his cheeks pale, his hands unsteady.

"Impossible!" cried Chalcote. "How?"

"Simple and easily enough, looking back on it. I was taught in six lessons, each lesson so hypnotically fixed in my memory that I shall never be able to forget it. It is the way they teach dullards and reclaim idiots. It is terribly unnerving, but worth all the strain. I can talk freely now."

"Even knowledge can be bought too dearly sometimes," said I. "I am quite ready to go through this wonderful language course, but what about Edith and Marjorie?"

"There is no alternative," replied Locke, after consulting Zeus. "For some reason stronger than the mere desire for convenient intercourse, the Ethmarians insist—and what they insist upon we must do. You will all be initiated into the language to-morrow. And when you know it, you will like it. It is a scientifically built tongue, with few and simple rules, no exceptions, three genders, a possessive case, and completely phonetic spelling."

"I don't like being crammed, treated as an idiot," snorted Chalcote. "You look as if you were recovering from a hectic night out, Austin."

"You would more resemble a crammed turkey than anyone else, Professor," retorted Marjorie, with more asperity in her gentle voice than I had ever heard in it before.

"You have no choice, Andrea," responded Locke. "I have already learned that. We are completely in the power of these strange people. They could kill us by willing us to die. They could turn us into imbeciles against our will, if they wished. They are masters of psychic force. You will go into the hypnotic chamber to-morrow night."

Not without pardonable reluctance, we obeyed the order. I have not much recollection of what happened. I remember that we went into a sort of schoolroom, and were shown the Ethmar alphabet and a few of the grammatical rules. Then some kind of violet light played on us, the instructor droned a monotonous form of words, and I lost consciousness.

When next I opened my eyes, I was in the same place but for a few moments weighed down with an awful sense of strain, of nerve fatigue. The instructor spoke again, and I understood him perfectly.

"Strangers, you are now citizens of Ethmar," he said. "You are no longer aliens. Be worthy of the honor."

I thanked him—we all thanked him—in pure Ethmarian, and stepped out of the schoolroom to meet Locke, who, with Zeus and Errangia, was waiting to greet us. We felt like beings on the threshold of a new world, though our heads were throbbing painfully. We *were* in a new world—a glorious world of new ideas, new thoughts, new marvels.

Errangia ran forward to meet us. She placed her hand on my shoulder. She spoke to us all, but she looked at me.

"Welcome, fellow citizens!" she cried. Her voice was music, was a caress. "You have renounced your own little world now. You are at home. And some day you will be glad—very glad. Some day you will be more glad, that you have come to us, than you can now imagine. Here, with us, you will at least be safe."

In the dazed excitement of the moment we did not pay very much attention to her actual words, though they puzzled us all when we remembered them. How or why we should be safer on Ethmar than on Earth, we could not imagine.

It was well for our peace of mind. The dread knowledge came only too soon.

CHAPTER XIII.

Stellar Artillery

WE were finishing breakfast in the dim twilight a few days later—it appeared settled that we were to remain the honored guests of Zeus—when Errangia glided into the dining hall.

Glided is the correct word. I am not using it as a mere metaphor. The women of Ethmar undoubtedly use their control of gravitation to enhance their charm. As they can float up and down (within certain limits), so they can glide along the ground at will. They do this with little apparent effort, their sandaled feet only lightly touching the ground now and then.

A picture of perfect beauty, of loveliness incarnate, was Errangia, as she floated towards us. Her short robe was gay with color, her limbs gleamed like ivory. Her hair was a nimbus of golden glory. We all felt the spell; even Edith and Marjorie confessing it by their silence. Chalcote turned away and muttered something under his breath. Locke devoured her with his eyes. (Have I told you that Austin Locke, in spite of his years of strenuous thought and work, has preserved his youth and good looks wonderfully?). For myself, I felt a strange qualm of uneasiness.

"I have come for your guests, Zeus," she said, using the name we had chosen for our host. "It has been thought well that they should be present at the Decision." And to us: "Would you like to come with me to a meeting of our Executive Council? To-night we carry out a decree of justice, in which you will be greatly interested."

Of course we expressed our eagerness, and asked many questions. Our hosts smilingly refused to satisfy our curiosity.

"For the present, friends," said Errangia, "you must be content to wait and observe. For your peace of mind you will know quite soon enough."

"It sounds ominous," mumbled Chalcote. "I hope none of us has been transgressing any of your laws—if you have any laws."

"Have no fear for yourselves," Zeus reassured us. "We have no laws in your meaning of the word, but we have customs. You have not violated any of our cherished habits and rules yet. But we must hasten if we would be in time. Of course, we could see the event on the screen, but some of us prefer the actuality."

Within ten minutes we five strangers, with our hosts

and half a dozen of their fellow students, were seated in the tower of a large air-vessel gliding along the coast line. An hour's flight brought us to a peninsula covered with magnificent buildings, and as we swept swiftly over it, the light of the great city sprang into sudden brilliance, revealing the marble dwellings, gorgeous gardens and tree-lined avenues of Ciudades, the metropolis of Ethmar.

A few seconds it lay beneath us—vast, vivid, wonderful, thrilling with awaking life—then we had left it far behind, and were penetrating the darkness that lay over the Continent of Umbria.

"Rather dangerous to travel at this speed in the dark," said Edith. "Is there no risk of collision with other airships?"

"None whatever," replied one of the girl students. "Such a thing is simply impossible. Our atomic motor carries along with us a large sphere of etheric disturbance, which acts on instruments on other ships. No vessel can approach another without ample warning. I have never heard of an accident during my life."

"But the machinery—does it never wear out, never break down?" asked the Professor, tartly.

"Why should it?" replied the student. "I can understand failures on *your* world—judging it from what I have learned in history and from your talks—your machinery is so wasteful, so inefficient. We use radiant energy, you know, which never fails. Our engines are made of practically unperishable material—the fifth transmutation of iron. It must be strange to live in a poor world such as yours."

She was indeed beautiful, full of life and health and knowledge, but somehow we didn't like this student at all. We were worms before her; creatures of an inferior race; barbarians.

By this time the sky had cleared, revealing many splendid constellations. We were flying between two firmaments. Beneath, the dark land sprinkled with the lights of the picture telegraph; above, the twinkling stars.

Presently other airships joined us, all our paths converging to a point ahead, and soon a great glare of light appeared on the horizon. As we neared, we saw that it came from a huge, electric beacon on the top of a conical hill. The hill itself was in the centre of a vast crater or amphitheatre, towards the rim of which we swooped down.

Just before we touched the ground, I caught a glimpse of scores of elongated, shining objects, much like our lost Spheroid, lying at the bottom of the great cavity. Then the door of the tower was opened, and we were helped down to the edge of the pit. We were at once in a crowd of people descending the easy slope.

The supercilious girl student was plainly out of temper.

"It is so archaic—such a ridiculous survival," she murmured, pettishly. "Assembling in the open air, in a crowd, when all this could have been done from home. What's the good of ether waves and thought transference, if we do these things as they had to be done millions of years ago? I really should not have come, if you had not been so pressing, Errangia."

"We can learn from the past," replied Errangia. "There is much in the past that will never be old or out of date. Some of us are hoping that humanity may call a halt to innovations soon."

"Antique! Antique!" scoffed the student. "Now I am all for change, progress, new ideas, new ways."

The press around us separated the Ethmarian girl graduate from us just then, and we found ourselves tightly wedged in the crowd lower down the slope.

It was a strange spectacle, a queer sensation, to be a unit of that tense and silent crowd.

The conical hill, cut into steps like the pyramids, was packed with people of the subject race. Those around us were the masters, the lords of Ethmar. It was quite incomprehensible to us.

The conical hill, the beacon, the massed humanities, those spheroidal vessels at the bottom of the great pit. The quiet stars, the still air. The feeling that some great event was in the throes of birth. The psychic emotion that washed around us and through us so vitally that we were all on the verge of inexplicable tears. The silence of our hosts.

To every question they had one answer:

"Wait."

At last the suspense ended.

A man of the dominant race was seen on the top of the hill, near the beacon. He held a long black tube to his lips, and as he turned about, speaking, his every word rang out clearly to the outer edge of his great audience. His voice was passionless, devoid of any straining after oratorical effect. As he proceeded, and as we gathered the purport of his speech, a horror and a fear grew upon us.

"Fellow-beings," he began, "you all know the reason for our presence. Sentence has been passed on a decadent world, and the Council of Elders still prefer the old and simple method of public assembly for uttering its decrees.

"One more world has been tested and found wanting. A world that should have been held as an outpost of Interlect against the restless forces of the Inorganic, has in its decline passed the critical point, after which there can be no recovery. The people of that world will never rise to true civilization.

"The Executive have therefore made all preparations to reduce that world to the unconscious ether. It is the second planet of sun 829, of group 54 of the Milky Way. Our destroying ship is now charged and ready for its journey. Within one year after it is despatched on its solitary voyage, star 829 and its system will cease to exist.

"If anyone has any objection to immediate action, it is not too late to speak. Our decision is just, our action necessary; but we are always willing to hear any adequate reason for delay. Speakers must be brief."

He paused, waiting. For a few tense seconds there was a silence so perfect, that the sound of my own breathing was burdensome to me. Then a woman's voice broke the spell—the voice of a woman who stood on the terraced pyramid.

"I speak for delay, Pronouncer of Sentence," she cried. "I know your reasons, but I challenge the infallibility of your judgments. Give the doomed but ten more years—reduce the speed of the destroyer. If the race should repent, you can always recall your missile of death. I ask this because I once lived there—my kindred are on that world still."

"Are there any serious objections?" asked the man on the hill.

Both the appeal and the manner in which it was received kept us dumb with surprise. No wild cry for mercy, no pardon asked—nothing but a few years' delay in the blotting out of a sun and its planets. And neither astonishment, pain, nor sympathy in any of the faces near us, nor another protest. Only a slight laugh from the girl student somewhere behind us, and a man's impatient ejaculation.

"I wish they'd get on with it. This antiquated mumming makes me tired."

"It is decided, then," said the Pronouncer of Sentence. "One appeal only has been made, and that by

a woman whose mind is obviously biassed. For two hundred years we have watched the downward progress of the planet from which she came, and we know that it will never be worthy of life. The decree holds. Let the destroyer go."

A faint murmur went up from the crowd as the last word left his lips—a murmur that became a sigh of relief, as one of the spheroidal vessels at the base of the hill rose slowly and hung for a moment in the air. Then, like a flash, it shot upwards out of sight. A long-drawn hiss, a wailing scream, was heard, and then no more.

For a year that sinister vessel would shoot through the depths of Space, awful, silent, relentless; at the year's end, star 829, and his planets, and all that on them lived, would be changed into unconscious dust in the twinkling of an eye.

There was no more speaking, no more ceremony. The Ethmarians have reduced formality to its minimum. Immediately the destroying shell was out of sight, others of the space-ships rose from the ground and gathered near the conical hill, clustering upon it as bees upon a queen at swarming time, and we saw that they were being rapidly filled with people of the subservient type. As each vessel was loaded, its screw doors were driven home, and it disappeared in the sky. For more than an hour this process of embarkation continued.

At last there was only one small group left on the lower terraces of the pyramid. These walked down to waiting airships. Amongst them was the woman who had protested. She walked erect, calm of face, dry-eyed.

"It is quite clear what all this means," said Locke. "The people of Ethmar are astronomers and mathematicians, and devote their whole lives to research and study. They employ the people of a less civilized world to do all the other work of life. We have just seen some of these latter, after a term of service, returning home."

"You imply that the universe is full of humanity—that they can travel about from star to star at will," Chalcote remarked in a subdued tone. "It's beyond belief."

Zeus and Errangia joining us just then, we plied them with eager questions.

"It is indeed as Mr. Locke says," replied our host. "The people of the other world come to serve, but it is a free and willing service. Be patient; see and learn all you can, and more will be told to you shortly. The Great Council has already considered the problem of your presence amongst us, and the other and greater problem of your own world. Be patient; you are with friends."

"Now just what does he mean by that?" whispered Edith, in a confidential aside. "Are we in any danger? Are we unwanted and troublesome intruders."

The young girl student who had turned up her nose at us before, ran up to Errangia at that moment. She could not possibly have heard what Edith said, but in some queer way she *knew*—and we knew that she knew.

"Very troublesome," she shrilled, "but I don't know about being unwanted. Let me tell you this, strangers. You would never have reached our world if our observers had not seen your quaint old vessel, plotted out its course, and pulled it here. The antique fossils who call themselves the Great Council have funny ways, haven't they, Errangia? Oh, don't go off in defence; you are a little bit old-fashioned yourself, I know."

Errangia laughed gently, but made no reply to this flippant Ethmarian flapper-graduate.

By this time we had reached our own airship and joined in the homeward exodus. We were back at the house of Zeus before dawn.

As I lay down to sleep that morning, my thoughts ran on the missile of destruction the Ethmarians had launched against star 829. And in my dreams I saw that dread stellar projectile speeding silently through the black abyss—speeding onward, ever onward, with infallible aim and irresistible force, for the ending of a sun and its system of worlds.

Suppose that stellar shell had been aimed at the earth?

CHAPTER XIV.

Amazing Ideas

WILD, incredible, improbable, as this sober record of our experiences must seem to you so far, I come now to something still more amazing and unbelievable—something I would not accept on the word of anyone else. But I have seen; I have heard; I was convinced against my will.

During the next few nights, the Ethmarians were exceedingly curious concerning us. They allowed us to see little more of their own ways of life, but extracted a vast amount of information from us. I feel sure that in addition to our spoken words, they read many of our thoughts. Particularly did they question us about the progress of civilization, our hopes and fears for the future of our race.

"We can't refuse to answer them, but they are infernally inquisitive," Chalcote muttered one day. "It is like being put through the third degree. If it goes on much longer, I shall shut up like a clam."

Fortunately when the next night crept over the land, we five strangers in a strange world found ourselves alone. We were sitting on the roof of the house, looking over the city aglow with light, at the sky, bright with unknown constellations, at the golden sea beating on the shore. These things had lost their novelty, but they had not lost the charm that was all their own.

Presently we heard voices in the lower part of the house, and Zeus and Errangia appeared. We greeted them warmly, never expecting the thunderbolt that was to tear our complacency to rags and tatters. They returned our welcome in silence, Errangia unusually grave. Zeus was the first to speak.

"You must pardon us for our curiosity, my friends," he said. "There are reasons. In the great struggle that is ever going on between Life and mere Material, we of Ethmar have learned to suppress all personal desires and feelings. The story of Ethmar is the story of a splendid conquest over Nature. For ten million years we have followed the ideal of our Foundress, Vuestra. Her words—graven in the stainless white metal of her memorial at Ciudades—were these:

> "'Science shall be your chief weapon in the fight against the inorganic: you shall know no scruples of emotion in the struggle: you shall allow no traitors in your own race: you shall be the lords of all other races: you shall make no wars, but shall utterly destroy all enemies; you shall progress without ceasing in the higher astrophysics: you shall fix no limit to your ambition: you shall disregard all thoughts of future personal life: you shall live for the preservation of the Human Race.'

"Those words, spoken by Her ten million years ago, we have followed and obeyed. Because of those words we sent the destroying shell against Star 829. Because of them we have questioned you. Of that, more later.

Now tell me, what thing have you learned here that has perplexed, astonished you most?"

We all looked at Locke. He answered without hesitation.

"We can understand many of your devices and discoveries—imperfectly, dimly, perhaps—but what we cannot understand at all, is the population of so many worlds. It's beyond us. So far as *our* scientific knowledge went, we were rather inclined to believe that the origin of man was a unique event, that it could not have happened anywhere except upon our own earth. To imagine that on thousands of planets scattered through space at such vast distances, the same sort of human being should have come to exist—it is unthinkable.

"Of course, at one time everybody believed in a Personal Creator who made Man in His own image out of the dust of the ground, but our modern thought does not accept the theory of direct design."

"Yet design has much to do with the answer to your puzzle," said Zeus, quietly. "You must admit that human design can influence human destiny?"

"Yes," snapped Chalcote. "But Man could not originate by his own desire."

"I can scarcely understand the words, though I can see what you mean," replied our host. "You would not speak of the origin of Space, of Time, of Matter: why talk of the origin of Man?"

The two savants stared aghast, for the moment paralyzed beyond speech. Was it possible that these god-like beings were ignorant of the theory of evolution?

"It is my turn not to understand," said Locke. "Humanity must have had a beginning."

"You are in the infancy of intellect, friends," said Errangia, shaking her golden curls solemnly. "We of Ethmar know nothing of human origins. So far as *we* know, life never had a beginning. Life is co-eternal with matter; Man is co-eternal with Nature. Life is forever striving with Not-Life, and the battle must ever remain a drawn battle."

This stumped us completely. All our cherished ideas received a nasty jar.

"What price Darwin now?" said I rather flippantly. "Personally, I've never been quite convinced."

Marjorie Lester took up the challenge.

"But it is so very clear," she cried. "We know that our earth was once so hot that no life was possible upon it. We know that Life came, probably grew out of the ooze and slime of the early seas; that as conditions changed the primordial germs developed into plants, fishes, insects, reptiles, birds, mammals, man. We have proved the theory by fossil remains and embryonic changes. If we are wrong, how did Life come at all? How did Man arise on earth? How did Ethmar become inhabited?"

We hung upon the answer Zeus gave.

"Ethmar was populated as yours and every other world was populated. It was first planted with the primal life germs of which you have spoken, and then colonized by migration. Since the beginning, our history assures us, we have been able to travel in space; we have searched the Milky Way for planets on which life may be possible; we have obtained a footing upon thousands of worlds. You have seen photographs from many of our colonies, and from your own planet."

"But if the earth were colonized by people of your race, how is it that we have lost your civilization, your culture? How is it that our early history is simply a record of an emergence from barbarism?"

Austin Locke put this query, and then, with an approving nod and grunt from Chalcote, plunged into a brief outline of the doctrine of evolution. He grew quite eloquent in his defence of Darwin; he might have been a K. C. (King's Counsel) pleading a special case.

Our hosts listened patiently and quietly. It was Errangia who answered.

"A fascinating idea. To you, knowing of no other world than your own, it may have appeared convincing. To us, it is merely an ingenious speculation. It is correct as to the evolution of higher plant and animal life from lower, but quite wrong as to Man himself. Man is unique, eternal. The higher mammalia on your world may have come to resemble the human form; certain of your races may have degenerated into beings little different from animals; but Humanity has always been a thing apart."

"And you believe that mankind is eternal?" asked Marjorie.

"We cannot believe otherwise. We know that but for man's ceaseless struggle with matter, life would long ago have perished out of the sky. If man had not always existed, he never could have come into being, because in the eternity before his advent life itself must have passed away. . . .

"We know that all the people on all the thousands of inhabited worlds are of one race and blood—though some are more backward in development than ourselves; that they are all descended from a company of men and women who came, an unknown time ago, out of the vast gulf of space in which our whole star universe is but a little island. They came across a distance we cannot traverse, cannot even calculate as yet; the means of their coming we do not know; their names are forgotten.

"Yet we are certain that there is no life anywhere in our galaxy but the life we have transplanted from world to world. We sow the seeds of lower life, and then, when each world is ready, we send colonists to take possession. It was in this way that life first reached your world, and that other planet of your system, the one you name Mars."

"But if we accept this—and I suppose we must," said Locke, with a sigh, "how is it that our ancestors lost all knowledge of their origin? How is it that we have no such records of our past? We know that man has lived on earth at least a million years. How is it, if we are colonists of your race, that we are now so inferior? How is it that all our research proves our ancestors to have been savages, almost animals?"

"Your ancestors were rebels and outcasts," replied Zeus. "They were hostile to the teachings of Vuestra. They seized upon your planet, and upon Mars, to live out their own way of life. You have no records of them? Are you sure? Think carefully. But Errangia will read you some entries in our history, so that you may understand."

Errangia opened the big volume she had been nursing on her bare brown knees. We hadn't a word to say as we prepared to listen to the strangest story that ever fell on earthly ears. Our brains were already in a whirl of astonishment, but we were now to hear something more amazing than anything that had gone before.

Common sense and reason protested, yet in spite of them we knew that we should believe what we heard.

CHAPTER XV.

Story of the Fall of Man

ERRANGIA'S voice was low, but musical and clear. I could have listened to her all night without tiring, so sweet it was, so calm, so caressing. And yet, with nearly every sentence, fresh surprise seized

me, fresh questions rose in my mind. I will translate as literally as possible.

"Year 9,698,304 of the Vuestran Era.

In this year some exceptionally gifted men created a great sensation. They challenged the teachings of our Foundress. They asserted that the primal instincts of Nature are more trustworthy than the logical deductions of science. They hold that Nature itself is alive, is one vast organism, and that we can trust our impulses better than our reason. There was much discussion, but the heresy made little headway.

"Year 9,699,025.

The Naturalistic Heresy has, within the last fifty years, increased beyond all expectations. Its adherents have demanded the use of an uninhabited world on which to make experiments. The Great Council has very properly refused permission.

"Year 9,699, 056.

The heresy continues to flourish. Hiadaim, our foremost mathematician, a member of the Council, has embraced it. He has asked that two other planets of Sun No. A 1622—both of which are planted with life germs—he given to him for the purpose of testing the theory. The Council, of course, has refused, and has erased his name from the list of members.

"Year 9,699,056.

In this year the Great Naturalistic Revolt occurred. Hiadaim and a chosen band of his followers, of both sexes, seized two space vessels and left Ethmar forever. They were tracked and pursued to the system of Sun No. A 1622. On the third and fourth planets of that system, groups of them had settled. They were asked their intentions.

" 'Here we shall live and die,' said Hiadaim, who had landed on the third and larger planet. 'Here we shall love and bear children. Not an invention, not an idea, not a word of your civilization shall be given to our children. They will grow up as Nature desires, as the animals grow up, and will walk from ignorance to knowledge by untrodden paths. Instinct shall guide them instead of logic. On each of our worlds we have destroyed the vessels that brought us, and every appliance of science and art that we possessed. We shall till the ground and war with the beasts, using our bare hands or such rude weapons as Nature may suggest. We shall not mention our origin to our children. We shall die, and leave them on these two worlds—each world ignorant of the other—to work out their own unaided destinies. Generations yet unborn will know the result of our experiment, but I predict that our descendants, on some distant day, will rise to your level by natural means and with a greater store of physical vigor. Learning to navigate the star-ways, they will at last share with you the lordship of the Milky Way.'

"The pursuers returned to Ethmar with their report. The Council's first thought was to destroy the rebels at once, but scientific curiosity prevailed. It was decided to let the experiment proceed, as a warning to the other heretics. If the Naturalists became a danger, they could at any time be annihilated.

"Year 9,714,981.

An expedition sent to the rebel settlements reports that the descendant of Hiadaim and his followers are all that he wished. They are living as animals amongst animals, with no appearance of intellect, but multiplying rapidly. The coming of our space ships drove them, in terror, into caves and woods. Some photographs were obtained.

"Year 9,860,950.

Another visit to the rebels on system No. 1622. Photographs taken. Humanity has made some slight progress, but evidently at a terrible cost. The planets must have been saturated with blood in the long progress out of barbarism, and the evil passions evoked in the struggle are firmly implanted in the race."

Here Errangia closed the Volume and looked at us. Our minds were in a whirl of chaos. All our ideas, all our learning, had received a shattering blow. Yet we had lived on Ethmar long enough to feel convinced that what we had heard was simple fact.

Marjorie Lester was the first to speak.

"We must believe it," she cried. "And it is wonderful. I have always had uneasy doubts about the evolution of man. I have often wished to know the truth. See how everything fits in—how things are explained!

"The Golden Age in the past; the Garden of Paradise left for ever; the rebellion and fall of man; the greater size and age of early men; the traces of a once universal language; the story of the Ark; the derivation of all humanity from one centre, one group of families; the hope and longing for some far day when the Golden Age will be regained; the similarity of the names Adam and Hiadaim; the universal feeling that Man, after all, is a being above and apart from the animals; the stories of angelic visitors and apparitions in the sky; the strange belief that the planet Mars is also inhabited—are not all these things made clear?

"Is is evident that some of Hiadaim's followers must have told tales to their children, and that some of these tales—fragmentary and distorted—have come down to us. It is wonderful—it is glorious. We are not alone. We have kindred on a thousand unseen stars!"

Locke was not so enthusiastic.

"I suppose we must, but it is hard to cast off the convictions of a lifetime. If ever we return to earth we must devote our lives to spreading the truth."

Chalcote grunted angrily in his beard, but made no audible comment.

"You will make good disciples of Vuestra," said Errangia. "You have accepted the truth without question. Are you prepared to know more? I have hinted at this matter before; it is vital for you."

"Tell us all," answered Locke, looking straight at Errangia with a glance that betrayed his growing admiration. She did not return his gaze, but looked at me, and went on:

"First I will read one more extract from the history.

"Year 9,981,115.

An expedition sent to report on System A. 1622. The rebels have made rapid progress in invention, in the arts and sciences, but very little in morals or logic. The evil habits gained during the long struggle with Nature appear to be in ingrained in the race. They devote more thought and skill to the killing than to the helping of each other; more time to passing pleasures than to the study of eternal truths. Interesting photographs were taken. Our ships caused great alarm on the larger planet, but the smaller red planet is more advanced intellectually and its people were merely puzzled and curious. We fear that it is evident Hiadaim's experiment has failed."

"Here are some of the views taken on your world in that year," said Zeus. "It was now 9,981,707, and as one of our years equals five of yours, they represent scenes 3,000 years ago. You never expected to see anything of that antiquity. They are the latest we have. A vessel was being prepared for another visit, when our instruments warned us of your approach, our researchers traced your path and found your starting point."

He handed a sheaf of colored sheets to us as he spoke. It was a strange sensation—looking at photographs taken 1,000 B.C., in the age when Greece was young, Persia, Egypt and India splendid but corrupt, and the rest of the world mainly savage and nomadic.

Three of the views chained our attention. One was a bird's-eye view of Athens—Athens white-crowned with the Acropolis and the figure of Athena, stretching out her spear over the marble city, towards the Piraeus and the sea—Athens as every artist dreams of it, as it was to the eye of Socrates.

The second was a picture of a great Egyptian city on the borders of the desert, its houses and roads glaring white in the hot sunshine; a river with its fringe of palms to the left, and on the right the distant Pyramids.

The third was a glimpse of the virgin prairie of North America. Herds of bison rolled in brown waves across the land, the smoke from an Indian wigwam rose in the air, and far away ran the blue line of the Rocky Mountains.

When reluctantly, we handed back these wonder glimpses of the past, Errangia spoke again.

"You see now why we have been so interested in you, in what you have had to tell us. Your earth and man have always been in the thoughts of the Council. Had any of our ordinary colonies been in such a backward state as your world, we should have destroyed them long ago. But you are an experiment, and we have given you time."

"Then you mean . . ." I asked.

"There is a point of human development which determines all future progress. If that point be reached before the barbaric instincts are lost all future advance is hopeless. If, as we fear from our reports, and from what you have yourselves told us, your race is selfish to the core, and thoroughly illogical, our patience will be at an end. Your world must be destroyed."

"As Star 829 and its system will be destroyed within the year?" asked Locke, in a low voice.

"Yes."

A chill of horror seized us. We know now what Errangia had meant when she had said that we were at least safe on Ethmar. Nowhere else, in all the starry universe, were we safe from the cold judgment of these beings who decreed the life and death of suns and worlds at their will.

CHAPTER XVI

On the House-Top

MARJORIE was again the first of us to recover speech.

"But surely you will not destroy us without hearing our defence?" she cried. "You must at least feel some pity for us. *We* are not responsible for the past."

"Pity," answered Errangia, "is an emotion we have outgrown. It is only found amongst backward races. We shall, of course, hear all you wish to say. Whatever decision we reach, we shall carry out our judgment without hesitation. We look forward to a time when every habitable planet shall be peopled by humanity equal to ourselves. We shall then concentrate on the great problem of reaching those distant universes that are now seen only as dim nebulæ in the void. Nothing will induce us to grant life to any world, any race, that falls short of our ideal of fitness."

"But . . . " began Locke.

"Do not be alarmed yet, friends. The Great Council will not hold its next formal meeting for two months, and your defence will then be heard patiently."

It was evident that nothing more could be usefully said, so we all went down to the midnight meal. We aliens ate our synthetic meal quietly, having rather too much food for thought, but our hosts chatted quite normally and cheerfully.

It was as Errangia had said: the sentiment of pity had long since died out here. These people ruled their lives by clear reason and iron logic. Much as we had seen of them, they were yet to us uncanny and incomprehensible.

That morning, after the girls had gone below, we three men sat up late, far into the day, talking. From a sheltered corner of the housetop we had a great view of the silent city sleeping under the heat of a tropic day. DX 1490 glowed fiercely blue in a sky devoid of cloud. Songs of birds came up to us on the light breeze, with the hum of harmless insects from the gardens, and the faint rustle of wind-stirred leaves. Everywhere the rotating discs of the picture telegraph flickered in the sunlight.

"Well," said Professor Chalcote, "what do you folks think of things now? Shall we ever get back to earth?"

"You know as much as we do," I retorted. "Speaking as a lawyer, weighing the evidence, I expect we shall return if they decide to spare the Solar System. If they destroy it—we stay here."

"If they let us stay," put in Austin Locke. "We may be included in the general death sentence, remember. Of course, I know we must believe what we have just heard, but it's difficult—difficult."

"You may both be shocked," went on Chalcote, "but supposing that our genial hosts carry out their threat, would it be such a very lamentable disaster?"

"It would be wholesale murder," I replied, hotly. "We have friends and relatives at home. It won't bear thinking about."

"I don't see that," the Professor responded. "The world is full of evil and pain, of wasted life, wasted effort. Right up from the animal creation, life is one long fight for food, one long war, one long bitter struggle. Is it pleasant to think that struggle may endure for untold ages? I am afraid the Ethmarians are right."

"Nonsense!" I cried. "Life is a good thing, else why do we cling to it so tenaciously? Why do we dread the idea of death? One would think you didn't care about seeing the good old earth again."

"One can get used to anything," Locke interjected. "We have many friends here, and Ethmar is a far happier world. Or could be happier for us under certain conditions. . . ."

He spoke haltingly, the sentence trailed off.

"I think I know what you mean, Austin," Chalcote replied. "I have the same idea myself. Under certain conditions—under one certain condition, at any rate—I could cheerfully spend the rest of my days here and be happy, no matter what happened to our own troublesome planet. I'm only in the prime of life, and I've never married. Been too busy to have time for women—except one—though I've always admired them. I never saw one to equal Errangia."

His colossal conceit, his sheer impertinence, was staggering.

"Professor Chalcote, I'm surprised at you," I mocked. "What a hope! Forlorn isn't the word. Errangia would no more think of marriage with one of us—folks of an inferior race—than she would think of—er—eating raw meat."

"I quite agree with Mark, Andrea," said Edith's father. "The idea is preposterous, utterly hopeless. I grant you that one can't help admiring Errangia for her physical beauty no less than for her brilliant brain and acute mind, but marriage—well, I'm afraid to men-

tion such a thing. Not to speak too bluntly, there may be physiological obstacles. . . ."

"I would risk that," sneered Chalcote. "I've not kept my eyes shut since we came. By their own story, we are all of one stock, one breed. But *you* needn't lecture me, Austin. I've seen you looking at Errangia, as I never saw you look at your late wife for years. You came between me and one woman—I believe you would do the same again if you could. And as to you, my young legal friend, let me tell you that I've seen Errangia looking at *you* in a queer way—a sort of way that Edith doesn't like at all. How's that for the preposterousness, now?"

He pointed a waggish finger at me, smiling grimly.

"Come, Andrea, we've talked nonsense enough," said Locke, speaking with more passion than I had heard in his voice for a long time. "What was the original subject before the meeting?"

"The possibility of our return to earth," I put in. "And how we could convince our hosts that the earth need not be destroyed. We ought to get back, if only to tell earthly humanity of its true origin, of its kindred scattered throughout the sky."

"They wouldn't believe us," said Chalcote. "I doubt if the sight of us descending in an Ethmar space-ship would convince them. And as to going as prophets, seers, missionaries, on a sort of uplift crusade—ugh!"

"I don't share your gloomy views, Andrea. I think we could take back such convincing proofs that all intelligent people would listen to us. What we must do now is to concentrate on the idea of return; to impress upon the Ethmarians that we are a progressive race, rapidly overcoming the past; and to—er—er—hope for the best."

"Yes," was Chalcote's reply. "That is just it. We must hope for the best. We—must—hope—for—the—best—tra-la-la! But have it your own way. I've a few other ideas. I don't intend to be ordered about and disposed of, without making some resistance. Oh, I know a thing or two. I've found out a few useful trifles. And," he ended, darkly, "it may be that the boot will be on the other leg, after all. As to the fair Errangia, I grant all you say. I was only chaffing."

I felt sure he had been in earnest, but refrained from telling him so. Somewhat alarmed, we pressed him about his hint of resistance to the Ethmarians, but could get no satisfaction.

The unaccustomed daylight now began to try our eyes, so we went down to the sleeping rooms.

The artificial coolness invited rest, but I was much longer than usual dropping off. I was worrying about the Professor. He had been a disturbing element amongst us since we sat down to that far-off dinner on the distant earth.

How disturbing he was yet to be, even my disordered dreams that day did not prophesy.

CHAPTER XVII

Complications

IN the days that immediately followed, we made ourselves into a sort of Earthly Mutual Admiration Society. Four of us, that is. Professor Chalcote went about on his own, so that we seldom saw him between sunset and sunrise. He seemed in fairly high spirits, but not one of us could get a word out of him concerning his activities.

We spoke to the Ethmarians of the meritorious side of earth's history. We related some of the deeds of heroism, of love, of sacrifice, that make bright the pages of man's story; we told of the truth-seekers, the pioneers, the martyrs, the brave men and women who have lived and died for duty's sake; we dwelt upon man's ceaseless upward struggle, the signs of progress, the promise of the future.

And whilst we were thus busy, we were studying the Ethmarians, trying to see into their minds.

One feeling we certainly shared with them now. We no longer thought it curious that they were an astronomical race. The sky held their kindred and ours; the study of the heavens was their elementary geography; the stars were like the lights of distant cities—tokens of unseen friends they shone upon.

No wonder that with their marvelous unity of purpose and sternly logical minds, these followers of Vuestra were the lords of the stellar universe. No wonder that the less advanced races of other worlds were willing to come to school to Ethmar, and in return to do all the hard and menial work of the planet. No wonder that progress was universal, since the penalty of degeneracy was death.

The decrees of the Council carried authority, we were assured, to one world colony so remote that the swiftest space vessel required ten years to complete the journey from Ethmar. This ship traveled many times faster than our own Spheroid. And it had made many journeys. The mind reels before the thought of such distances.

Every day gave us new cause for wonder, impressed us more with the cold altruism of the Ethmarians, spurred us on to greater effort in defence of our own poor little world.

In this endeavor, it was natural for us to fall into two parties, working more or less independently. Locke and Marjorie paired off, leaving Edith with me, and I asked nothing better. I fancied that Edith was being drawn closer to me by the danger that hung over us; that she was changing rapidly from a charming, self-willed butterfly to an even more charming woman of advanced thought.

I renewed my plea for an engagement. The fear of Bobby—if ever we returned—worried me.

"It seems foolish to talk of such things, Mark dear," she said one day. "So far as I have gathered, they don't have any marriage ceremonies here."

"They sign a sort of civil contract," I pointed out. "Wouldn't that be sufficient?"

"I'm afraid it would hardly be valid on earth. You see, now we are away from home, I feel myself slipping back into more old-fashioned ideas. The contract here is only a sort of temperamental, time-period affair. When it terminates, the community take the children. Wouldn't it be awful, Mark, if you signed for me on trial, and then grew tired and threw me over? I daren't risk it."

"You know I should never grow tired of you; I should never want to terminate the contract," I protested. "Besides, we could be married again, before all the Bishops we could get, as soon as we reach home."

"That's it, Mark—as soon as we reach home—if ever we get back. Now, I am serious, perfectly serious. I won't consent to anything of the sort here. If we ever see the earth again, I'll give you my answer at once. At least, after I've had a few words with Bobby—supposing he isn't married already. I expect Judy Cardex has noosed him by this time."

"And I must wait?"

"You must wait, Mark. And there's another thing. How can I be sure of you after the way Errangia looks at you? How can you help being fascinated by that golden goddess?"

"As if any goodness could compare with you, you darling!" I cried, seizing the opportunity to tell her what I knew she wanted to hear. "As if anybody could! As if she would be at all likely to take any really personal notice of a poor, degenerate earth-worm, or let an earth-worm take any notice of her."

Edith fastened on this chance to alter the trend of the conversation.

"Why not, Mark? You are quite as handsome as most of these super-men. And I'm sure father is smitten with your goddess, though he has never said a word about it—and so is the Professor. The Professor—just think! Father isn't so bad; he's not old, really, a fine figure, a good personality—but Andrea Chalcote! He's too funny for words in that role. And let me tell you something else, Mark. Marjorie knows about all this, and she has made up her mind to marry dad at the first time of asking. She ought to have captured him long since, but he was so obsessed by his work that he hardly knew she existed. She was just a pleasant and familiar feature of his environment.

"Now he has more time to think, is more appreciative, she should act. If I were in her place, and dad proposed a civil contract here, on any terms, I should seize the chance, make sure of him before he does anything foolish. Marjorie is the only person I could put up with as an in-law."

"She ought to make sure of him—yet you won't make sure of me?"

"Is there any real danger of you doing anything foolish, Mark?"

My heart leapt at the veiled meaning, the tone of her voice, the promise of words. I would have taken her hands again, but she veered off hastily on another tack.

"We have said enough about ourselves, my dear. I am really getting anxious about the Professor. He is so mysterious, throws out such queer hints as to what he is going to do. Where does he go? He has not been home—I mean, to our usual quarters—for two whole days."

"Oh, old Chalcote is right enough," I said. "He is fearfully inquisitive, of course. He seems to have made several friends amongst the chemical Johnnies. I expect he is trying to get hold of something with which to astonish his fellow savants some day."

I must confess that I was feeling uneasy about the Professor myself, but I didn't want Edith to worry, and after awhile the subject dropped.

What made me specially uncomfortable were the hints I had gathered in conversation with some friendly Ethmarians, who so far as I could make out, were in the administrative department. I found that there would be no objection to our return to earth, but we should not be allowed to take back any really important inventions or formulas.

We should be allowed to take sufficient proofs of our journey to convince people of the truth of our story; we should not be permitted, for instance, to take particulars of the secret of the Vuestran space-ships, nor of the construction or constitution of the bombing shells that could destroy whole solar systems. A ship would be given us in which to return, our safe landing would be guaranteed, but the ship would automatically go back to Ethmar at the end of the calculated journey-time.

Knowing all this, and knowing Andrea Chalcote's bull-headed ways, I was not really surprised when Marjorie Lester burst in upon us one night, full of news. Her eyes were shining, her face was flushed.

"It's the Professor!" she cried. "It's what I have been afraid of. He is a clever man, but he's an idiot—a complete idiot!"

CHAPTER XVIII

What Had Happened to Chalcote

IT was some time before we got Marjorie sufficiently calmed down to give us a coherent story. She was excited, furious, and Austin Locke was the only one of us to whom she would listen.

"There . . . there . . . Marjorie," he said, patting her hands. "Be a good little girl now, and tell us all about it. What has Old Grouser been doing now? Proposing to some fair daughter of Ethmar? Setting the Council at defiance? Trying to steal a space-ship, and slip back to earth without us?"

"Not quite, but something as bad. He has drawn us all into trouble, Austin," Marjorie got out at last. It seemed to help her—the scientist patting her hands. "I shouldn't have known anything tonight if I hadn't been eavesdropping. I didn't do it on purpose—you all know I wouldn't do that.

"I was studying some of those wonderful star-maps in Errangia's laboratory. Thought I had the place to myself was settled comfortably in front of a big easel, when Errangia and her modernist girl friend came in. You know the one I mean—the supercilious student who snubbed us at the Place of Decision. Before I had a chance to speak, or make a move, they were talking behind my easel, and then I didn't like to interrupt.

"'It is no more than I expected,' the student said. 'I think the Council has been very silly; they are growing as antique as you are, my dear. These barbarians ought to have been sent back—or sent out—long since. Is it true that that nasty, grumpy old man has been put under influence, and that his will is too stubborn for treatment?'

"'Quite true,' Errangia replied. 'His psychic force has proved stronger than we thought possible in one of such a backward race. He was under hypnotic control for a whole day, and his mind was read easily, but all attempts to obliterate his memory failed. We found that he had learned too much—that his memory, down to the smallest details, was wonderfully retentive.'

"'Some of your old fogey friends have been too friendly with him, no doubt,' sniffed the student. 'What does he know?'

"'He has learned the chemical formula of the disintegrative element we use in our shells for destroying worlds,' was the answer. 'If he ever went back to his own planet, he would be able to manufacture the element. Of course, we cannot allow any other world to have that power.'

"'The Council are not so hot-headed as you would have them. Our other visitors are not as bad as Mr. Chalcote; we must consider them. The man will be put under the influence again before we take further steps. One thing is clear: we must not endanger the peace of the universe.'

"'You must not?' cried the student. 'You are endangering it every moment. I've no patience with you! If only some of us younger, progressive people could get on the old Council. We should make short work of your rebels. And *I* shouldn't go thinking too much of them—*I* shouldn't tolerate one of those barbarians thinking too much of *me*. Take care, Errangia!'

"What Errangia replied I don't know, she spoke in such a low tone, and then they both went out, still talking. But I had heard enough. The Professor is going to be our Jonah. You must talk to him severely, Austin."

"What can I say—what can we do?" asked Locke. "He's very self-willed, and you see that even the Ethmarians couldn't dominate his mind."

"No, I was too tough for them!" shouted a rancorous voice. "I've got it all here, people—here!"

Professor Andrea Chalcote, hollow-cheeked, red-eyed, tousled, weary, staggered into our room and flung himself into a chair. He tapped his forehead again.

"Yes; I've got it here. I've got their precious world-destroying secret. Let me go back, let me have a few months in my laboratory, and I shall have something with which to fight. I'll make the stuff, and you'll make the spheroids, and we can shoot back. They'll either

have to leave the earth alone, or we shall blow this planet to pieces! I've been busy, I tell you, and I've got it—I've got it here! They have put me to sleep and read my mind; they've tried to make me forget. They can't . . . they can't. I've got it here!"

"I think you are acting abominably, Andrea," said Locke. "You are abusing our hosts' generous hospitality. Worse still, you are endangering us all. We shall be denied our hearing before the Council if you persist in this madness."

"The fair Errangia has turned your head, has she?" sneered Chalcote. "We are to consider our hosts, are we? A hearing? A lot of good talking will do. Our only chance is this hard head of mine. Let us get back to earth, and fight! They can make what conditions they like about our return—all we need is my head. I've got it here—every item and detail—here, I tell you. Don't be a set of fools."

"I hope we are a set of decent, honorable men and women, Professor," said Edith. "It would be dreadful to do what you suggest. If father ever dared to think of listening to your proposal, I should never to speak to him again."

"Have it your own way, then," Chalcote retorted, angrily. "If you won't help me, Austin—and just think how I could help you if you wanted to—er—elope with the golden Errangia!—if you won't help me, I say, I shall have to work alone. Oh, don't think I couldn't manage without you. I've got something up my sleeve yet. I only want to see the earth again—that's all."

A footstep sounded on the threshold. Zeus walked in.

"I see that you are discussing Mr. Chalcote's position," he said, in his even, emotionless tones. "Pardon me for intervening, but there are some things that must be said. I can assure you that we know quite well what action he contemplates in his dark mind. He will never be allowed to accomplish his purpose."

Chalcote rose up, blazing with wrath. Zeus gave him a glance that quelled him instantly.

"You are powerless to harm us here," said our host. "I see that you have been talking, and that your friends know something of your mind. I have now come to tell you what the Council have decided about this matter.

"I need not tell you, my other guests, that I have found you so far above the intellect we expected from your world, that I am anxious for you to return, and for your world to have a breathing space, a time of trial. I look upon you as friends, and so does Errangia, and our voices will be heard on your behalf. But the actions of this man are making our position awkward.

"Apart from every other consideration, we find that his mentality, his whole being, is so warped and base, that we could not possibly allow him to return with you. He would be an adverse influence in your fight to redeem your world, to save it from extinction. He has also spoken openly and distastefully of love—to Errangia. Even if we could overlook these facts, we dare not let him go. His final treachery leaves us no choice.

CHAPTER XIX

Sentence on Chalcote

"HIS *final* treachery?" I asked. "You know it—and he has not yet told us?"

"I regret the necessity that made us discover it," Zeus replied. The process of probing into a human mind of the lower type is always unpleasant. This is what your companion contemplates. If you return, you will travel in one of our space vessels. We shall so set its automatic mechanism that within a few hours of its arrival on your planet, it will start on its journey back to us. All our calculations are made; a ship is even now ready, if required.

"Your companion has learned the secret of the timing mechanism. He intends, when the vessel reaches your world, to retard its departure until he has made sufficient disintegrating material to charge it. Then he would fill it with the deadly mixture, release the timing device, and send the vessel back. He would try and destroy Ethmar."

"And why not?" shouted Chalcote, defiantly. "Why not? It would only be self-defence. You would destroy us. Yes, he's right, Austin. It's what I would do—and you ought to help me. Every Government in the world would help me if I get back and put facts before them."

"Perhaps they would if you could convince them of your sincerity, of the reality of the danger," cried Marjorie Lester. "But would it be right? Even to save our own world, we should not be justified in destroying this beautiful planet."

"There is no danger to Ethmar," said Zeus, calmly. "We could not allow such danger to exist. Your companion will not be permitted to make or to obtain any of the disintegrator here—nor will he ever be permitted to return to your earth."

"Never to return?" groaned the Professor. "Never to see my family again? Never to pursue my studies, never to astonish my rivals with my new knowledge? To live and die here—a prisoner—a sort of tolerated wild man of the woods? Is there no alternative? Can't you kill me outright?"

"We could, but why should we, except in case of stern necessity?" was the answer. "There are two alternatives. You can go out of life willingly, as our people go when they wish; or you can submit to mental treatment to erase all dangerous knowledge from your mind. If you were to resign your will to our psychic operators, that could be done, and then, harmless, you would be free."

"Never—never!" Chalcote shouted. "Never! I shall never give up my will; I shall never surrender my knowledge. There I am stronger than you. I shall remain myself. If I must stop here, I must; but I will not be treated like a frog on the dissecting table."

Nothing we urged had any effect on the stubborn Professor; and I must admit that, in spite of everything, we could not help feeling a little sympathy with him, could not withhold a little admiration for his attitude.

When Zeus left us, after a final, friendly warning, we talked a long time about our troublesome comrade, but got the matter no further. He would not surrender his will, relinquish his memory; if he had to stay on Ethmar he had to stay, and that was the end of it. Anyhow, he was fagged out, sick to death of all the badgering and bullying, and he was going down to have a long sleep. He washed his hands of us.

But when he had gone, Austin Locke took up a new line.

"If he can't go back. I don't see how we can. After all, he is one of us; we ought to stick together. We must tell the Ethmarians that we all go, or none of us go. Don't you think so?"

"*I* don't," snapped Marjorie, tartly. "You want an excuse to stay here, don't you? I should leave our old friend cheerfully."

"I am sorry for him," said Edith.

"And I'm not sure your father isn't right," said I. "Our task, if we return, will be heavy enough for our united efforts. Professor Chalcote's help would be invaluable. His reputation is international. Then another thing strikes me, as a lawyer. How should we account for his absence?"

"Just tell the truth," Edith flashed out.

"It would sound very convincing, wouldn't it? As far as the world knows anything about us, remember, there was a big explosion in your father's workshop—at least, some sort of upheaval which will be called an explosion—in which the doctor and the journalist were probably killed. We five are all misisng; then months later the four of us turn up from nowhere, and say we left the Professor on the planet of a star that can't be seen except through a telescope. We should have a regular hornet's nest of relatives, friends, scientific johnnies, etc., around us. We must take him, or we had better stay here."

"I'm afraid we must stay, Mark," Locke said, not at all dolefully. "It shouldn't be any great hardship. We are safe, we have never been so robust and healthy in our lives."

"Oh yes, indeed," replied Edith, with a piquant toss of her shingled curls, "we are healthy enough. Quite brown, aren't we? And what lovely bare arms and legs we have! But we do miss the shops, and we should like to go back and buy a few Paris gowns. We do our best, but I find it hard work living on such a constant intellectual high level. Really, we are just a little bit homesick."

"Well, we must wait till the meeting of the Council," was Locke's final word. "Before then we must try and persuade him to change his mind; if we do go back with a message for humanity, we shall need him."

"*If* we go back," said Edith. "There is always that great big *if*. And won't everything seem queer on the old world when we get there? No god-like beings to levitate one through the air, no five mile per minute air-vessels, no intensive study of astronomy and mathematics, no picture telegraph, no radio power, no golden sea, no trips to other stars. And fancy—sleeping in the night and being awake all day!"

"Yes—and how terrible our social chaos will be to us, after our glimpse of this orderly world," sighed Marjorie. "I don't know how they arrange things here, but I've never seen a diseased person, or a poor-looking house, or any anxiety about their work. No poverty, no slums. I don't think I shall like going back."

"I've tried to get some information about their system of social economy," said Locke, in his best platform manner. "All I could learn was that they have no system at all. Things have worked themselves to a satisfactory settlement by sheer lapse of time—just as the pebbles on a tidal shore become smooth and round in the course of ages. They appear to do things in the right way by mere habit. The folks who can organize, organize; those who can best produce goods, produce goods; those whose talents lie in distribution and serving public needs, distribute and serve. Greediness, miserliness, envy, love of luxury, were weeded out of the Ethmar character long ago. They act, in short, as a company of earthly humans, decent folks, social equals and rather intellectual, might be expected to act in a common emergency. Of course, the Utopia is made easier by the fact that the people of less advanced worlds come here and do the hard work. What about their legal system, Mark?"

"Much the same as the social," I answered. "No police, no law-courts, no prisons, no crime in our sense of the word. They have no hesitation in putting the populations of whole worlds to death, as we have seen, so they are not opposed to some sort of retributive and preventive justice. How the Great Council is appointed, why its decisions are accepted, is beyond me. They have solved the problem of combining obedience to authority with the utmost personal freedom."

"Well done, Mark!" Edith was ironical. "How wonderfully illuminating! I don't think I could have expressed my ignorance more clearly myself. Now we have talked enough; time we went to sleep, tried to forget our dangers and perils. Good-morning, all."

Marjorie followed her down into the cool and perfumed interior of the great house. Locke and I did not stay long after the lights of the city had given place to the blue and golden glory of the dawn.

CHAPTER XX

Those Who Pass Out

I HAD not been asleep an hour when I woke abrupty, with a sudden, strong conviction that I was needed on the house-top. It was strange, an uncanny feeling, which I cannot describe. So compelling was it, so forceful and life-giving, that all lethargy fell from me as I got up, dressed, and ran quickly up the stairs.

The door at the top was open, and a broad white band of sunlight lay across the steps. I sprang out into its full glory on the roof, and came face to face with Errangia.

I was not at all surprised. My sub-conscious mind was prepared for the meeting. It seemed quite a matter of course that, after the customary greeting of hands on shoulders, she should say:

"I willed you to come. My vessel is waiting. I thought you might care to see something that takes place today—something I want you to see in reality, not merely on the picture telegraph. Zeus would not mention it to you, or to your friends. Follow me—take my hands."

The hypnotic influence of her will was still strong upon me, though so far waning that I found it possible to wonder, to speculate, even whilst I obeyed. The drop from the roof to the turf below was deep—quite thirty feet—but her mind-power kept the speed of our descent within the limits of safety. We landed with a little shock, a little out of breath, that was all.

We entered the waiting air-vessel. It rose at once, and was soon spinning along over the golden sea, rapidly leaving the land. We flew low, and as the glittering yellow waves raced swiftly under us, I noticed, at regular intervals, a number of floating, anchored rafts, with tall masts rising from them. On each mast a pair of revolving discs flickered in the sunlight.

The sea, as well as the land, was watched incessantly by those tireless, recording eyes.

I felt no desire to talk, no wish to ask questions, and Errangia was silent. She spoke for the first time, two hours later, as we passed over the green isle of our landing.

She was standing near me, we were looking down through the transparent walls of the ship's tower.

"Your thoughts on reaching here must have been strange," she said. "You did not know, then, that we had pulled and directed you."

"Our feelings were stranger than can ever be told," said I. "It seemed to us that we were the most daring, the most adventurous, the most successful beings in the universe. Now we know that our achievement was nothing. You have robbed us of all joy in our success. Your supernal skill dwarfs everything we have done."

"And yet," mused Errangia, "*our* achievements already seem trifling to *us*. We have explored this universe of stars, planted it, peopled it, and govern it; we are still unsatisfied. We want to extend our sway. We are yet mocked by the Before and the Beyond."

"But you haven't populated all the Milky Way yet," I protested wonderingly. "To reach one of your colonies a ship takes sixty of your years—three hundred of ours—and you send several families in the ship, so that the

children may be sure of reaching the long journey's end. Surely that is scope enough for you?"

"You do not understand, friend. This starry system is no more to us than your own world was to you. Vast as it may seem, it is but an ephemeron (a temporary being or existence). Out of chaos it came, back to chaos it must go. If, before that end comes, we have not learned to navigate the greater distances beyond its boundaries, our race will perish."

"Surely that is looking too far ahead," I cried. "And I understood that our ancestors came originally from one of those distant universes?"

"That is true. We know that we came from the Unknown Beyond, but the vessel on which our ancestors travelled was accidentally destroyed and its secret lost. The construction of the smaller vessels such as we use between the stars, seems to have been always known. Millions of years passed, and then, under the leadership of Vuestra, the founders of the Ethmar nation came to this planet. Here we have lived ever since, gaining knowledge and power, planting and colonizing worlds. And after these millions of years, our goal seems as far away as ever. DX 1490 will not always glow. When his radio-active energies flag, Ethmar will no longer be a home for Man.

"Can you wonder that we are so studious?"

There was a note of sadness in my beautiful companion's voice. I was overwhelmed with a flood of ideas too vast for my earthly brain.

"I still wonder," I said. "To us, whose known history only goes back a short time, though we believe our planet itself has existed nearly two thousand million of years, the end of our sun seems too remote to be of interest. It does not cause any of us a moment's care."

"But supposing it did concern some of you," persisted Errangia. "Supposing some of you could not endure the thought of the approaching end: would they willingly go on living?"

"Men and women have died for very trivial fears, but I don't think the end of the sun would worry any of us. We rebels have at least courage to dare all that life threatens or death may mean. Can you of Ethmar do more?"

"That is what I brought you here to see, my friend," she said, pointing to a strip of land we were now approaching. "The constant dread of which I have spoken unnerves some of the best of us, and we give up life. Sometimes we give up life for other reasons. . . ."

Our pace slackened until our vessel hung hovering over a barren beach between the golden sea and a range of bare hills. At the foot of the hills a small space-ship rested. People were standing about, and several aerial vessels lay near.

"We must not go any closer," said Errangia, in a low voice. "These people neither need nor desire our presence. Watch."

I gazed with uncomprehending eyes, at the strange scene. The little group on the sand broke up, and five of them—three men and two women—stepped into the space-ship, drew the screwed door up, and fastened themselves inside. A brief pause and the gleaming metal globe rose from the ground, vanishing, with a shrill scream, into the clear sky.

Those who were left scattered to their vessels, and these rose quickly and sped away, leaving the place as desolate as though no human foot had ever trodden its barren sands. Only one tall column of the picture telegraph was in sight.

I looked at Errangia inquiringly.

"You have seen the suicide of five of our people who are weary of life. They have gone from us forever. We speak of them as

"Those Who Have Passed Out."

CHAPTER XXI

A Kiss Light as Air

"STILL I don't understand," said I.

"It is difficult to explain how we know, but we do know that certain paths in space lead nowhere. I mean, our instruments tell us that there are certain lines of direction upon which our swiftest space-ships could travel for hundreds of years without coming to a star. When, from mind weariness, or a feeling of social unfitness, or unhappy love, any of us desire to end our lives, we embark on one of those empty lines of travel, one of those endless journeys. Before starting, the stopping and reversing mechanism is removed, so that return is impossible."

"Then nothing remains for them but a slow death from hunger, thirst and cold!" I cried, recoiling in horror from the thought.

"That is as they wish," was Errangia's calm reply. "Some may go that way, sinking into a painless coma at the last. Others may prefer a quick release, will unscrew the door and be annihilated instantly by the zero cold of Space. After all, death is but a change of environment, a change of sphere. Some may cease to live on our plane by a mere effort of will."

"They could do that on Ethmar; why go away?"

"The sight of physical death is mostly unpleasant. We keep no dead, no outworn material bodies, on Ethmar. Even those who die in the normal way, or by accident, are sent out into space."

The airship had now turned and was on its homeward journey. Again a silence fell between us, though I sensed that Errangia wished to say something more; that she had not brought me out here merely to show me the passing of the suicides.

When at last she spoke, it was slowly, haltingly, not at all in the cool, emotionless Ethmarian manner.

"Be frank with me, man of earth. You are learning our ways, our ideas; you will be honest. Do earthly men and women ever give up their lives for love?"

"Many have done so," I answered. I was feeling very uncomfortable. "Normal people regard such actions as a sign of weakness."

"Naturally, those who have never endured the agony of a hopeless passion will scoff,' she replied. "On Ethmar as well as upon earth, that holds good. Now let us be open, friend. In spite of all our logical civilization, we cannot escape the consequences of having material bodies. We of Ethmar must love as well as merely live. Indeed, because of our great mental development, our loves are deeper and stronger than yours. Quite apart from the physical fulfilment of passion, our mental longing for satisfaction, for requital, is keener. To love, and not to be loved by the desired one, is to us the deepest of all pains. To know that one's love is returned—just to know that, if to know no more—is ecstasy."

This was decidedly awkward. I began to see what was coming.

The gaze of Errangia's clear eyes was full on mine. There was just the faintest tinge of fresh color on her cheeks. Her right hand was on my shoulder; her left hand held mine in a firm clasp.

"Let us both be frank," she went on. "You know that Zeus and I are your friends: you do not know that in secret I am an adherent of the Naturalistic Heresy; that had I been living at the time of Hiadaim's revolt, I should have gone with him. I can trace my ancestry back to a branch of his family. You see therefore, why I have sympathized with you and your world all along; why I have taken more interest in you than others think wise; why I have thought so much of *you*."

It was coming: I saw it coming: there was no escape. I should not be telling this at all if it were not necessary to make later happenings clear.

"Mark, dear," she said, looking at me as though her gaze would penetrate my very soul, "do you love Edith so very much? Would your life seem worthless without the thought of her companionship? Have you no room in your life for another love?"

I found it difficult to reply. There was no use in pretending I didn't understand. I am not boasting, I try not to be at all conceited, but one must face facts. I admired Errangia greatly; the charm of her golden, regal beauty was enough to intoxicate any normal, healthy, natural man.

"Of course I love Edith," I said, trying in vain to shake off the fascination of those wonderful, thought-reading eyes. "I shall marry her when we return to our earth—if she will have me. She is the one woman for me. Even if I loved another—even if I loved the most beautiful woman on Ethmar—what could come of it? Had I never known Edith. . . ."

She looked at me a little longer. I believe she could have made me say and do whatever she wanted. Strange thoughts were creeping into my mind; to myself I was already making excuses. Then she looked away, looked dreamily over the golden sea, and I became myself.

"Of course your customs are different from ours. You do not allow freedom in love; a tie, an attachment even, you prolong for life. You are indeed a strange race."

"No doubt," I answered. "Yet it seems to us, on the whole, the better way. In spite of your time contracts, I am told, most of your marriages are permanent."

She turned those glorious, compelling eyes on me again. Again the fascination of her beauty, the hypnotic power of her will, enthralled me.

"That is quite true," she said, leaning dangerously near, a tendril of that wonderful hair brushing my face. "It is because we can, to some extent, read into another's mind, and because our concept of beauty includes intellectual as well as merely physical qualities. I know enough about you, Mark dear, to know that the woman you love is very fortunate. She will never feel jealousy. You are one of the dutiful, steadfast men. If you had never met Edith—if you had been heart-free when you came to Ethmar—if you had loved me—ours would have been one of the enduring unions. Do you not think so Mark?"

You may call me a rotter, setting this down. I'm not. It's part of my story, a necessary part.

I spoke, yet hardly realized that I was speaking, scarcely knew what I was saying. It seemed to me that someone else, not myself, moved my lips.

"I do think so," I muttered. "I love Edith dearly, and shall always love her—but I love you, too, Errangia."

She swayed still nearer to me, one arm fell across my shoulder. Her golden, perfumed head came down, and something indescribably soft and sweet touched my cheek.

It was a kiss light as air, delicate as the gentle caress of a fairy's wing.

"I am weaker than I thought," she said, with a little smile. "It seems that we shall never quite overcome the primal emotions. No wonder I am suspected, am called antique. Forgive me, friend; forget if you can. Do not let remembrance come between you and your Edith. I was foolish to try you—and I love you all the more for your steadfastness. I am an Ethmarian, and we have at least learned one lesson well in the years of our striving. We can accept the inevitable with proud courage. We are friends still and shall always be friends?"

"Always," I said.

"And now we are nearly home again. When we land you must go downstairs at once, for you will need sleep. One thing I ask. What has happened today must be our secret, at least whilst we are alive on Ethmar."

I promised silence readily. I did not then quite understand the qualifying clause at the end. I promised, also, to try and forget.

But I shall never, whilst I live, forget that touch of a fairy's wing.

Edith knows the whole story now, and has long since forgiven. Sometimes, when she wishes to tease me. . . .

CHAPTER XXII

Another Confession

EARLY the next evening Austin Locke came to me and intimated mysteriously that he had something to tell, that he must see me alone. Having studied for the law, having a solid, legal face, people feel impelled to confide in me.

We went down into the gardens and found a sheltered nook near a fern-fringed pool in which a little fountain splashed drops of gleaming gold. It would have been an ideal spot for a lovers' meeting, and I could not help thinking of Errangia. The light, warm breeze that caressed my cheek was a reminder of that fairy touch.

In fact, I was so preoccupied, at first, that I scarcely noticed what Locke was saying, nor the difficulty he had in getting his words out. He coughed, hesitated, made a few commonplace remarks, fell silent, coughed again, and then roused himself for a mighty effort.

The first words to which I really paid attention were startling enough.

"I must confide in someone, Mark, or explode. It's hardly a thing I care to discuss with Edith or . . . or . . . Marjorie. And Chalcote . . . ugh! You are a sensible young man, though you may want me for a father-in-law. (Now what's the good of beating about the bush—you know very well you do.) Well, as I was saying, you are a fairly sensible chap and not likely to go off the deep end at what I'm going to tell you."

"I'll try and keep cool," I returned, considerably puzzled. What was he getting at? "If you are to be my pa-in-law, am I to be your father-confessor?"

"Something like that, Mark. Well, the fact is, I'm . . . er . . . er . . . I'm in love."

At last, I thought he had made up his mind. He had been slow about it, kept Marjorie waiting long enough. I was relieved and glad, and said so.

"There is only one thing that would please me more. If Edith would only make up her mind about me in the same way! I congratulate you, Mr. Locke. You will have a wonderful partner and I am sure you will be happy. There will be no difficulty, I am sure."

I rather relished patting my future relative on the back. He looked rather startled. He did not accept my assurances quite as readily as I expected.

"You are sure of that, Mark? It is more than I had dared to hope. Would she consider the suggestion?"

"I've no doubt at all, Mr. Locke. When you were missing, when you were learning the language, she admitted as much. I don't like telling you this, and you must not let her know I've said a word, but all of us are quite aware of it. In fact, we knew before we left the earth. We all wondered why you and Marjorie never got married. She worships you."

"Marjorie?" cried the scientist, reeling as if he had received a heavy blow. "Marjorie Lester? But I wasn't referring to her at all. And she. . . . This is terribly complicated."

"Not referring to Marjorie?" I asked. "Then—to whom "

"I thought you would know, Mark. Who could help loving Errangia? I am serious; it is no laughing matter. I think of her all the time. Oh, I know it sounds ridiculous, banal, for an old widower to be talking in this strain, but there you are. I never felt like this about Edith's mother. In confidence, Mark. I admit that Andrea has some excuse for his animosity. If I had cared for my wife as I am sure he would have done, if I had not neglected her for my studies, she might have lived.

"But the past is past and gone. I am looking forward. I love Errangia so much that I shall not leave Ethmar unless she will come with me. What a glorious destiny—to link one's life with hers, go on together to the end, seeking and learning truth, challenging Nature's secrets, helping in the Conquest of the Universe!"

Knowing what I knew, remembering that recent journey with Errangia, I was feeling decidedly uncomfortable. I could not enlighten him, could not tell him that he was nursing an utterly hopeless desire. It was deucedly awkward. Our position was surely perilous enough without this love business making things worse.

Of course, I couldn't pretend to be shocked, or annoyed, or even surprised. Errangia was lovely enough to set a whole world by the ears. And when to feminine beauty is added perfect health and lofty intellect and fascinating personality—what could one expect from a scientific widower but the usual reaction?

Had mine been a speaking face instead of a legal one, Locke must have read all the above thoughts in it. As it was, he was puzzled—pained and puzzled.

"You think there is no hope, then? You can't speak? You think I'm merely foolish? Say something, Mark, for Heaven's sake!"

"I could say a lot, Mr. Locke, but what would be the use? The mischief is done. You are an older man than I am; it isn't for me to advise."

"Hang it all, boy, I'm not asking for advice. I'm just asking what you think—asking if, as an onlooker, you think there is any hope for me."

"If you insist, I shall have to be frank, I suppose," I said unwillingly. "Here you are then. In my opinion you haven't an earthly—or an Ethmarian—chance. It is quite hopeless. For one thing, I don't believe the Great Council would sanction any sort of marriage between any one of us and any Ethmarian. And I feel sure Errangia isn't in the least in love with you. You haven't asked my advice, but here it is. Try and forget. Put all such thoughts of Errangia out of your mind. *Make* yourself forget. Sounds rotten. I know, me talking to you like that, but I really mean what I say."

I was only wasting my breath. He shook his head solemnly and went off on a new tack.

"All very sensible, no doubt. But supposing Edith were an Ethmarian, how about the taste of your own medicine? Supposing Errangia were in love with you? You can't say you don't admire her, don't recognize her charm?"

This made me decidedly uneasy.

"There's no sort of analogy," I hurriedly replied. "Edith is human, and I feel that she really does like me, and—er—all that sort of thing. Of course, I admire Errangia—who could help?—but that is altogether different. You must give up thinking of her in the way you do—and not only for your own sake but for Edie's sake—for all our sakes. We must tread carefully just now, if we want to get back to earth."

I could see he was effected, that he knew I was right, but he was in the grip of something more elemental, something stronger than mere reason.

"I'm afraid we are wasting sound logic, Mark. It's no use. The talk has done me good, but I can't get Errangia out of my mind. She colors all my waking thoughts. Nothing else seems of any value, of any real importance. If I can't win her love, I don't care very much whether we return or not. . . .

"Of course, all this in strict confidence, Mark."

"Of course," I assented.

There was nothing more to be said.

The unaccustomed glare of daylight was already beginning to hurt our eyes. We went down, without another word, to the sleeping apartments.

Chalcote, Errangia, Locke—they were three perplexing problems. The outlook was very black.

CHAPTER XXIII

Various Interesting Matters

SKIP this chapter if you like. If you don't care about dry detail or mere information, you had better. But whilst we are waiting for the fateful meeting of the Great Council that was to decide the destiny of our earth, we went about and tried to interest ourselves in the Ethmarian civilization. Here are some of the facts we gleaned.

"It is extraordinarily difficult to understand a lot that we see," said Chalcote, one day. "The Utopias and scientific romances I have read always fall in one respect. They always make the story-teller omniscient. He always knows everything; has all the details at his finger ends. Is it likely? Here we are, a rather clever and advanced set of humans, plunged into a system and a culture millions of years old. How can we get a real grasp of it? If an Eskimo or a Bushman were dumped suddenly in London or New York, what on earth would he make of our trains, lifts, motor cars, telephones, electric light and heat, typewriters, wireless music? Still more mysterious to him would seem trade, coinage, cheques, bills of exchange, banks, stock-broking, tape machines, laws and politics. He couldn't even begin to understand.

"We are in almost as bad a plight here. I've done my best—and rather surprised them in the chemical line because that's my strong point—but I'm as much in the dark about some things as I was the day we landed. Take coinage. The Ethmarians don't have any money as we understand it, yet they have some sort of metal tokens that they give to one another on entering houses."

"I know," said Edith. "They tried to explain it to me, but I couldn't quite grasp the idea. The tokens have something to do with the size of the house, the number of people in the house, and the value of the annual food product of the planet. Very hazy."

"Exactly," went on the professor. "And yet, no doubt, it is as clear and simple to them as our paper money is to us. Then take their work—I mean the clean work. How do they share it out? How do they arrange payment? Where are their shops, their factories? We just don't know."

"We haven't seen much of the planet," Marjorie reminded us. "I have gathered that certain areas are set apart for manufacturing processes—areas in which no one lives. They have no buying and selling in our sense of the words. All that sort of thing seems to be done through big voluntary associations formed of people who like organizing and fussing about."

"And the children—they are not allowed to run wild everywhere," said Chalcote, with a wry smile of sour enjoyment. "Till they reach a sensible age, they are kept well under control, in special educative colonies. I've been allowed to see one settlement, and I must say the youngsters appeared happy enough. Wouldn't have suited me, when I was a nipper!"

"They certainly know how to bring up a race of healthy, serious-minded students," replied Marjorie Lester. "It is what we shall have to learn to do, if we are to save our civiliztaion from going pleasure-rotten."

"There's one thing we haven't learned, and it puzzles me a lot," said I. "What is their attitude towards religion? Have they any religion? Any idea of God or Immortality? I have never heard an Ethmarian mention these subjects."

"I can enlighten you there," said Locke. "For I've talked about those things with Zeus. It's rather difficult to put into words. They don't pretend to know much more about spiritual matters than we do, and yet one could hardly label them agnostic. The question of God, they say, is too big for them. When they have finally conquered Space, and reached some of the other universes that are now incalculably distant; when they have learned more of the marvelous cosmic rays that come in out of the infinite, the rays that keep up and rebuild all matter—then, they say, they may begin to have light. That all existence is really spiritual—that materiality is only a superficial aspect of life—seems to be generally understood. They don't quarrel about God, because, being finite, they don't pretend to understand the infinite."

"Dad is on the platform again," cried Edith. "He is once more lecturing the eager but ignorant searchers after truth!"

"I don't find anything at all amusing in the subject, most irreverent child," said Locke, severely. "The students of Ethmar do not talk in that flippant manner. As I was saying, the question of God does not trouble them at all. The universe is spiritual, that is enough at present.

"With regard to Immortality—you all know my own views, or at least what my views were on earth. I thoroughly believed that Death ended all—that the soul and mind of man was just a flame that perished when the fire of life went out. I scouted all religious ideas and sneered at all spiritual claims. Now I am not so positive. It appears that the Ethmarians went through all these questions ages ago. The psychic evidences of survival proved so strong then that no one here appears to have any doubt. They assure me, as an ascertained fact, that human personality does survive, and can at times communicate with those who remain on this side of death. The conclusive evidences came two million years ago."

"Then why do they never speak of the dead? Why do they not talk with them, learn from them?" asked Marjorie.

"It seems as though some directing mind or minds on the other side of the veil decided that the need was no longer urgent. When the fact of continuance was accepted, the manifestations ceased. They were always unsatisfactory (as with us on earth) owing to the extreme difficulty of maintaining contact between the two differing planes of being. So now, except for rare cases of mental stress, or the importunities of backward souls, there are no more spiritualistic phenomena. The Ethmarians, knowing that this material life is only a phase of existence, one day in Eternity's Year, go on calmly, waiting for the time to move forward. Knowing that Infinity lies before them, they are free to concentrate on the Present. God and Death no more vex these people than the discovery of the North Pole worried us. I envy them their assurance, their peace of mind."

No one cared to break the silence that fell, when Locke (metaphorically speaking) stepped off his platform. Along with our wonder and our queries, a sense of relief, of joy, descended upon us. It was good to know that our inmost yearnings, our common aspirations, were, after all, worthy; that Life was not a mockery of a few years of tantalizing hopes and vain efforts. If the Ethmarians believed, so could we.

It was Chalcote, as usual, who struck a jarring note.

"If they are so sure of immortality, I don't see why they should be so bothered about the preservation of the race. And I am very certain it won't make us any more easy about our own little planet. The astral plane is all very well, but it is the solid, material world that matters to us just now. We have to go before the Council tomorrow, don't forget that. To go before them like naughty children, like guilty prisoners. We have to suffer for the misdeeds of our forgotten ancestors. It's a case of 'the sins of the fathers' with a vengeance."

The sins of the fathers. What would the world's punishment be? What would the Council decide on the morrow?

CHAPTER XXIV

The Great Council

IT was near midnight when we started for Ciudades, to attend the meeting of the Council that decided the fate of worlds and stars. In the vessel with us were Zeus and Errangia. Locke and Chalcote were in good spirits, but we others—normal, ordinary human beings—were silent and preoccupied. The consolations of science and philosophy were not for us.

"How do you elect your Council?" asked Chalcote, in the course of a stream of questions. "Who votes on it?"

"Elect? Vote?" responded Zeus. "I hardly follow. We *select* the members for their ability, of course. Founded by Vuestra, the Council has kept up its number and influence by only admitting members who have passed certain rigid logical tests. Only those who can pass such tests are eligible, and from these the Council itself fills its own vacancies. And, of course, no one offers himself unless he feels capable and worthy. We never have too many candidates."

"An improvement on our method of putting men in places of power after a count of heads!" said Locke. "Ah, well; we have yet a lot to learn."

As we sped along, the coast line slipped beneath us, the back washes of the receding tide shining like threads of gossamer gold in the circle of light we carried with us, and soon we reached the great city busy with life and motion. Its pavements and buildings glittered with light more brilliant than the daytime sun. The tall chimney that gathered the waste electrons from the power plant sent aloft a soaring cloud.

We alighted in the central, tree-fringed square, setting foot to ground amid a curious, but polite and undemonstrative throng. A swift car took us up and bore us through the wide streets to the Hall of Council. Feeling like prisoners going to trial, we passed in through the pillared portal.

Everyone greeted us kindly, made way for us; yet we all felt the inflexible purpose behind their smiling faces. Behind their geniality we sensed a calm determination to see that justice—sheer, logical, abstract justice—should be done.

The interior of the Council Hall was large and lofty, treated in a style of art that suggested solemnity and repose. It was like being in a vast cathedral. The only sound save the patter of feet was the low hum of whispered conversation that stole round the arched recesses of the walls and died away in the angles of the vaulted roof.

Our friends led us forward to a raised platform at one end of the place, giving us seats near a long table at which stood twelve empty chairs. On this table were a number of weird-looking instruments, some books, and glasses of synthetic refreshment.

The walls, as in the house of Zeus, were decorated with stereoscopic views in natural color. Tall and graceful plants stood in lofty niches. In each of the five corners (the Hall is a perfect pentagon) a perfumed fountain fell noiselessly upon a slanting glass surface.

"What a lovely place," murmured Edith. "So different from Congress or the House of Commons. I wonder when the affair begins? I'm getting quite nervy."

We had not long to wait before the twelve members of the Council arrived. There was no ceremony, no fuss. They just filed in and took their seats in silence. Zeus was one of them; Errangia sat next to him. Six of the others were men, and four were women. Some were young and some were old, but all of them had upon their faces the stamp of serious determination and conscious power.

The tall, elderly man who sat at the head of the table opened the proceedings.

He referred briefly to the issue of the trial—the life or death of a system—as something which, however necessary, was not pleasant, but which, however unpleasant, may need be done. The great ideals of Vuestra must be followed. He had every confidence in the probity of all who would be called to bear witness. He knew that many regarded these public meetings as waste of time, as antique ceremonies that should long have been outgrown. He was not quite so modernist as that. He declared the inquiry open.

The first stage did not interest us greatly, and many of the younger Ethmarians sniffed audibly and looked bored.

Many extracts from the history were read. Views of our landing were shown on a screen. Scientific calculations of our journey were discussed and approved. Zeus and Errangia gave the result of their observations of us during our stay with them. Other people added various testimonies.

"They had analyzed us as though we were automata; dissected our minds and put them under a microscope," said Locke.

These formalities completed, another Councillor rose, challenging our attention at once by urging that it was already time the Solar System were destroyed. He spoke without note at first without any attempt at eloquence.

"The Public Prosecutor!" muttered Chalcote.

It seemed unreal. Tragic and solemn as the trial was, it was hard to realize that it was not a dream; that it was our world and not some unknown planet, whose fate trembled in the balance. It seemed utterly incredible that these twelve Sphinx-faced men and women should be about to deliver a fiat of life or death for hundreds of millions of human beings. But as the remorseless indictment went on, as it was forced upon us that the speaker's logic was faultless, his sincerity crystal-clear, the impression of unreality passed.

Our fears, which we had tried to lull, came crowding back; despair gripped us.

The speaker rapidly traced the progress of earthly humanity, drawing a vivid picture of the growth of the viler passions along with the slow evolution of the higher virtues. We shall never forget his closing sentences. In his growing zeal he became transfigured; he grew earnest, eager, oratorical.

"And thus the rebel races on these two planets have gone from bad to worse. Grown in power, but grown in selfishness. Grown in intellect, but grown in hypocrisy. Grown in science, yet tangled in superstition. Conscious of their progress, yet aware of their follies and sins. Praising Peace yet ever wallowing in War. Soaring starward in their aspirations, yet linked with the beasts of prey in their passions. Tainted with pity, yet capable of terrible cruelties. Increasing their knowledge, yet increasing their sorrows. Unable to live their own lives well, yet aspiring to conquer Space and Time. Peoples strong, yet weak; blessed, yet accurst; ever striving for higher things, yet ever doomed to failure. Rebels in origin, aliens in ideals, dangerous foes in the future—they must perish.

"Our future security demands their extinction. Our ideal demands it. The potential miseries of their unborn millions demand it. The system must be swept away; the planets must be destroyed; the rebels must die."

CHAPTER XXV

The Fate of the World

WHEN the speaker resumed his seat, there was the usual rustle of people bestirring themselves, but no applause, no visible excitement.

Several other Councilors followed in the same strain, all but one. This was a woman who asked why Mars need be destroyed with the earth, as its people were admittedly more advanced. She was answered that the days of human life on Mars were already numbered, owing to the slow failing of the planet's water-supply.

Then Errangia spoke, and we hung upon her words. She agreed with all that had been said, but added:

"We can surely afford to wait a little longer—to wait, at least until these friends of ours have passed into the future. This is a plea for pity, I know. Cannot we indulge in that archaic emotion occasionally?"

It was our turn next, and very courteously the President intimated that we could state our case.

As prearranged, Locke spoke for us. He assumed his best lecture manner, and put forth all his powers of persuasive eloquence. I am sure that in his scientific heart he quite agreed with the Ethmarians, and only opposed them for our sakes, but in the heat of argument he grew fervent, was carried away. He spoke exultingly of "The Destiny of the Human Race," of "The Promise of Progress"; soared into realms of poetic and prophetic idealism; dived into depths of the deepest gloom.

"Not alone do you of Ethmar cherish dreams of conquering and populating worlds," he cried. "Not alone have you discovered how to travel in space. Nay, you have always known that, whilst we have wrested the secret from Nature by our own skill. Shall a race whose ancestors had the daring to rebel against your mighty power, who have fought their way back to scientific light, through centuries of war and blood, who have dreamed of immortality and deemed themselves the Sons of God—shall this race be swept out of life at a stroke, leaving no trace of their triumphs behind? Must all our years of effort and suffering and sacrifice be as nothing? Must all our work be waste, must all our brains be dust?

"Would it not be better to welcome us back into the Stellar Commonwealth, to help us, rather than destroy us?"

"You are great in intellect," he ended. "Will you not also prove yourselves great in sympathy, great in patience, great in forgiveness? Let us live out our natural time—let us work out our own destiny."

There was almost perfect silence during his speech, and I could see that a few of the Council were moved by it, though some ultra-modernist flappers behind me sniffed impatiently. Still, the issue was prejudged, and when another member rose and pointed out coldly that sentiment and pity were of no real use in these matters, and that the extinction of a decadent world would be no loss, our hopes fell to zero.

"They have made up their minds. Might as well accept the inevitable," said Chalcote. "I'm not grovel-

ling; the tables may be turned some day. If we stop here we shan't see the flare-up. All we shall see will be the blazing out of an insignificant star for a few hours."

We shook our heads, refusing to be consoled by this Job's comforter. The horror of sweeping away all earth's millions in an instant, weighed upon us as the burden of his sin weighed down Bunyan's pilgrim at the gate.

Zeus was the next to speak. There was a friendly gleam in his eyes as he looked towards us.

"I will not review the facts," he said. "I need not say that, logically, our duty is clear. I will only place before you an alternative course of action. It is this. Let us send our visitors back to their native world, charging them with the mission of regenerating it—leading it to overcome the errors of the past. If they are not believed, or their mission fails within fifty of our years, let the penalty be paid. That is all I suggest.

"I have observed our rebel friends very closely since their arrival, and I believe they will accept my proposal. I believe that they will all—with the exception of Mr. Chalcote—go back on those terms willingly. There is just the possibility that we may have been rather premature in our judgment, that the humanity of earth may yet be able to rise to our level. Nor must we forget the small red planet, Mars. I have psychic information from the astral plane that a great new teacher has arisen there, whose life and work is full of promise.

"I repeat: if this delay be fruitless, then let the sentence be carried out."

Before anyone else could speak, Marjorie Lester was on her feet, her face flushed, her eyes bright.

"We accept the task if it be offered to us!" she cried. "It would be a glorious mission. Let us go back and we will bring our world to a knowledge of its danger. We shall no longer be rebels—we shall become true citizens of the universe."

Theatrical, no doubt, but nobody seemed aware of that. Edith managed to give me a secret nudge and a secret whisper.

"Marjorie wants to get daddums back to earth, away from Errangia."

The President arose.

"Are you all prepared to return on those terms, strangers? If so, the Council accepts the suggestion of Zeus. We are all agreed. You shall be sent back to your planet (all of you except Mr. Chalcote) and our sentence shall be suspended for fifty years."

Chalcote growled angrily, incoherently; then sprang to his feet and shook his fist at the Council.

"I'm to stop here, am I? I'm to be held prisoner, am I? Won't you all be sorry for that some day. I don't belong to a subject race, I'm a rebel. They won't go without me—they daren't, they can't! And if they do, look out! Yes, look out, all of you, just look out!"

Then came the most dramtaic exhibition of Ethmarian power that we had yet seen. Still standing at the table, the President pointed a stern forefinger at the Professor. A stream of blue light came from his finger tip.

"Mr. Chalcote," he said, calmly, "you will sit down; you will remain silent till the proceedings are over; you will do whatever else we wish."

The professor wilted as a delicate plucked flower wilts in the hot hands of a child. Dazed-looking, he sat down heavily, as one stricken dumb.

We turned at Locke, expecting him to confirm Marjorie's acceptance of the situation. He hesitated, appeared confused, and only spoke after an uncomfortable silence.

"I cannot give a definite undertaking, yet. I wish to know something else, to have an answer to a certain question, before I can say yes or no. It is . . . er . . . nothing of public interest. Tomorrow I may be able to decide."

Marjorie would have spoken again, but the President forestalled her.

"Then the matter is settled. The Council has decided; our ultimate action depends upon our visitors. We shall give them ample time to make up their minds, to form their plans, and we shall help them as far as we can.

"I take this opportunity of announcing that a special ether message has just been received at the Central Observatory from planet No. 4 of System M. 11,015. It will be decoded and transmitted by radio within ten minutes."

He spoke as though the fate of our world was a trivial matter, a mere item amongst other mere items. Even before we got out of the Council Hall, we felt that interest in us and our distant kindred had already faded. Our destiny was settled. Our future lay with ourselves. There was nothing more to be said or done.

With Locke's strange attitude damping our spirits, we returned to the house of Zeus, a silent and a gloomy party.

What would be the end of all? What did Locke mean? What could we do in the matter of Chalcote?

CHAPTER XXVI

Austin Locke's Madness

WE did not question Locke that night; we felt that we could not. We were dazed, numbed. The offer of the Council, coming after their stern verdict, was so great a concession that we could not understand the scientist's attitude.

The following evening he broke the silence himself. From our favorite aerie on the house-top we were watching the antics of a group of children at play in the gardens. It was holiday at the training settlements, and the youngsters were revelling in their freedom.

"The little ones seem more natural than the grown-ups," said Edith, with a sigh.

"I wish you wouldn't use that word natural in such a silly way, Edith," said her father, testily. "Since everything and everybody exists in Nature and is a part of Nature, everything and everybody must be 'natural.' There cannot be anything that is not natural. I expect you meant normal—ordinary—usual. Well, there are other things besides the children that are quite normal here. That state of mind called being in love, for instance.

"I have already, in confidence, spoken to Mark, but I can see that I must enlighten you all. The fact is . . . er . . . well, not to beat about the bush—I'm in love with Errangia. Now, don't all speak at once; wait till I've done. I am so much in love, it means so much to me, that I am resolved not to return to earth unless I can persuade Errangia to go with me. Sometimes I can hardly understand my own absession, my obstinacy; but there it is. Tonight I am going to speak openly to Errangia. Unless I receive from her the only answer that will satisfy me, I shall not leave Ethmar. She is more important to me than all the millions living on earth."

"I thought that was the game, Austin," jeered the Professor. "Not content with spoiling one woman's life, you want to sacrifice another on the altar of your vanity. Some hopes, old friend—some hopes! I wouldn't be in your shoes when Errie gives you the cool once-over. It looks to me as if we were all stuck

here. Must say I shall not be sorry to have your company."

Marjorie was acidly annoyed.

"Then, Mr. Locke, you would let the world go to its doom without a word of warning, without an effort to save it—just for a hopeless whim?"

Locke nodded gloomily.

"I'm afraid you have spoken the truth, though I do not admit that the case is as hopeless as you all imagine. Why ignore facts? I want Errangia for my wife and I cannot live in a world where she is not. I wish this were not so, but there it is. I shall remain on Ethmar unless Errangia will go back with me, will help me in the task of trying to save our people."

I, who knew how hopeless his desire was, who knew why Errangia would never give him the answer he wanted—I could not speak.

Professor Chalcote grinned malevolently.

"Save *your* people, Austin? What a smug phrase. I doubt if you could make an impression on the world if you lived to be a thousand and worked miracles daily. The average earthly human hasn't got enough brains to think cosmically. Don't you worry. Errangia won't faint with joy when she hears the great news. And if she did, there's me to consider. You can't go and leave me here."

"Of course we can, Professor," snapped Edith. "You are so horrid that it would be a great relief."

"We shall have no choice," said Marjorie. "They can do just what they want with us. But why bother about Mr. Chalcote? It is Mr. Locke who is really horrid, complicating things with his perfectly ridiculous emotions. I'm ashamed of him."

It sounds queer talk to you, my reader, no doubt. I can assure you that it didn't seem at all queer to us. In our most abnormal position, the values of many things were unusual.

Austin Locke's love-storm was, to us, in our circumstances, a tragedy.

"I wish I could view the situation with the detachment of a scientist," said Edith's father. "Unfortunately, I can't. But I won't keep you in suspense a moment longer than is necessary. I am going to speak to Errangia at once. She may be at her studies, but I am sure the women of Ethmar do not need leafy glades and moonlit solitudes to help them to decide the most momentous issues of life. Don't wait for me, if you have anything else to do."

He walked lightly to the inner stairs and vanished. Ethmar science and diet, the perfectly sterilized air of the planet, the absence of all injurious germs, had worked wonders with us, had taken years from our apparent ages. Locke's gait was that of a young and active man. I looked at the healthy faces and bronzed limbs of the others, and for a moment was glad we had come to this strange world. Then the thought of the fate impending over our own far off earth came over me like a shadow.

Edith looked at me, and understood.

"Yes, Mark, it is a glorious world, a wonderful civilization, but we are out of place in it. We have learned more than our poor brains can hold. We shall never be really comfortable here. We are still rebels, restless, dissatisfied. We should be better at home. I wish for dad's sake as well as for ours, that Errangia could be what he wants her to be."

"I don't—but I'm sorry for him," said Marjorie, in a queer, choked voice.

And I, the only one who really knew what Errangia's answer would be, could say nothing.

An hour later, Austin Locke returned. There was no striking difference in his manner, his face was Sphinx-like, but this time he did not walk lightly. His feet dragged on the smooth floor.

"I may as well come to the point," he said. "Errangia has given me a definite refusal. A marriage between us would not be allowed by the Council; and if their ban were removed, she has no love for me. Yet she assures me that she does not love any man of Ethmar. Under these circumstances I have decided to remain here whilst she lives and is heart-free. I will not abandon hope. Time may work a change. If she loved, she would defy any Council. As far as I am concerned, that settles the matter. I shall stay on Ethmar as long as Errangia lives."

"You have told her that?"

"Yes, Mark, I have told her that."

So all was lost. We could not return. We could not make any effort to save the world. We must stay on Ethmar, virtually prisoners. The decree of doom would go forth without delay. All we should see of the catastrophe would be the brief blazing-out of a tiny, telescopic star.

That brief blaze of light would be the funeral pyre of earth's helpless millions.

CHAPTER XXVII

One Who Passed

IT was some time during the following evening that Errangia found me alone on a high terrace in the garden. Our party had broken up into solitary units. We felt that there was nothing to be done, nothing more to be said, and we shrank from each other's company. I was even glad, for the first time, not to be with Edith.

I wanted to be alone, to conquer the weakness of my spirit, to brace myself against the horror to come.

Yet when a vision of unearthly loveliness floated up from the grassy level below, and Errangia glided towards me, I felt no resentment against her. Her psychic influence enwrapped me, comforted me, before she spoke a word.

"I have read some of your thoughts, Mark," she said. "But it is not easy, nor always pleasant, to probe into the human mind. I want assurance from your own lips. I want to know if Mr. Locke is finally resolved on his foolish course. Do you feel certain that he will not go back unless I go with him?"

"I am afraid it is too true," said I. "It is a sort of madness. Why don't you put him under mental control?"

She made a gesture of impatience.

"You think we like to control people, to overcome their wishes? We don't like it at all, and it is a very difficult and unhappy process. Mr. Locke is really a great man, almost on our level, and we shall not attempt to coerce him in that way. But tell me—do you think that if he went back, the people of your world would listen to his message? Would they listen to you, if you went without him?"

"I feel sure the world would take very little notice of *us* if we went without him. If we go back, we must take him."

"And you, Mark? Do you really want to return, do you really feel that you could do any good? Tell me; don't hesitate."

"Yes," I said. "Yes, I really want to go. I want to try, to make the effort. If we all went, and devoted our lives to the work, we ought to achieve something. Don't think I'm being dramatic, but I feel that I shall die better when the time comes, if I have tried to make the people understand, tried to make them think and feel cosmically."

She looked at me for several moments, then sighed,

and put her right hand on my shoulder.

"That's what I wanted to know, Mark. It settled things; It makes the way easier."

She turned away.

"What way easier?" I asked, vaguely uncomfortable.

"I had better not tell you, dear friend. You will know in good time. One thing I must say. I am glad—glad—that we two talked together that day in the airship over the sea. Farewell; farewell."

She glided to the edge of the terrace, poised there a moment, then sank out of sight. I ran to the parapet and watched her walk away under the trees, heard the hum of her little car on the smooth track beyond.

What did she mean? Why had she questioned me? Was it possible that she was prepared to sacrifice herself for us, for our race? Would she return with Locke—as his wife?

I could not think so, and yet no other alternative seemed possible. I went about, that night and the next, with the problem fermenting in my mind, waiting, waiting, for something—for I knew not what.

The morning following I *knew*.

Instead of retiring for the day, as usual, Zeus asked us to go with him to the screen room. The auditorium was, at this time of day, almost deserted. One small group of people only, silent as statues, occupied seats in the centre.

Zeus, who looked at us strangely, coldly, hurried some scenes of views across the white wall. City and country, land and sea, in all the fidelity of color, movement and perspective, passed before us. At last he left the switchboards and joined us. I looked at the picture that remained—looked at it with a puzzled sense of familiarity. All at once I knew what it was.

I knew the shelving sand, the inlets of golden sea, the desolate sand-hills. It was the place where Errangia had shown me the departure of the suicides. Now, as then, a space-ship lay on the shore.

"You remember?" asked Zeus.

I nodded, unable to speak.

"Look!" cried Edith.

There was a stir amongst the people gathered round the vessel, and one—a woman—glanced upwards, so that we saw her face clearly in the morning light. It was Errangia. Her golden hair, in that early sunglow, was a crown of shining glory.

I knew now, only too surely, what we were about to see. I knew what she had meant when she had told me the way would be easier. I knew now what that way would be.

"Will you explain the meaning of this to your friends, Mr. Arden?" said Zeus, calmly. "I know all, from her own lips. You can speak without hesitation; there need no longer be any secrecy. Tell them everything."

It was a command as well as a request. I felt that he was bending my will to his with iron force.

I glanced once more at the screen, and saw that Errangia was just stepping into the space-ship.

Impelled by a force I could not resist, I told them the meaning of the scene, of the method of passing out into the infinite upon these endless journeys. I told them of that morning Errangia and I had looked on such a scane as this, and something of what had passed between us. I said that Errangia was sacrificing herself so that Austin Locke would be free to go back with us to earth.

"I don't quite understand, Mark," said Edith. "Why should Errangia destroy herself in this awful way just to release dad from his mad decision?"

"Don't you see, Edie—don't you see?" asked Locke. "It's too plain, too terribly plain. Errangia loves Mark so well that she is giving her life for his happiness. She knows that I would never go back whilst she lived, she knows that Mark is keen on returning, is anxious that I should go. Her death will make the way clear. Oh, I've been a fool—a mad fool, Edie. . . .

"But, Mark, how was I to know she loved you?"

"He would never have told you if Zeus had not compelled him," said Edith, taking up my defence warmly. "I'm proud of you, Mark dear."

"Just like a woman," growled Chalcote. "Her man can do no wrong."

"The end is near," said Zeus, sternly.

Errangia, with one more upward glance, turned and spoke to her friends, stepped out of sight into the dark interior of the vessel. The screwed section that was the door was placed in position and driven home. The gray steel shape began to move, to rise.

"Can we do nothing?" cried Locke, agitatedly. "Cannot we prevent this happening, even now? Can you not send her a thought message—tell her that I will go back to earth without her? Is it too late?"

"It is too late." Our host's tone was cold as ice. "Even were it not too late, I would not interfere. She is justified in taking herself away, when her presence creates too much illogical emotion. I love her—that is why I am not there—yet I say that she has done well."

We stared aghast at him. Appeals died away upon our lips.

We saw the space-ship that would never return, rise from the sand and flash quickly out of sight. We saw the little group of people disperse to their aircraft. In imagination we saw the space-ship pursuing its silent way forever through the silent deeps, bearing within it, to regions beyond all human ken, all that would be left of the material shell of Errangia the Beautiful. Even when the suns are cold, and Ethmar itself is desolate, that silent ship will still be carrying its silent burden through the endless night.

Suddenly, Zeus switched off the scene, and the lights in the room began to glow. He led us out quietly, at the end of the corridor placed his hands upon our shoulders in the usual Ethmar manner, and walked away with firm, unfaltering steps.

We were as near to understanding this man, then, as we had been on the day we first saw him. He belongs to a race too high for us—a race that has learned to rule life and love with logic—a race that has cast away pity yet attained to peace.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The Professor Redeems Himself

THERE was now no obstacle to our return, excepting Professor Chalcote. As he was still obdurate, rebellious, defiant, the Ethmarians could not be expected to let him take away his dangerous knowledge. As Marjorie said, a few nights later:

"We shall not like leaving him, of course, but we must. We simply must give the old earth its chance. A lot may happen in two and a half centuries. And we have got to make up our minds soon. Rouse yourself, Mr. Locke—go and see the Council—get the date fixed. I'm not eager for the journey, but I am ready. A great work is before us, we shall need all our strength and will. Please don't brood over the past—look forward."

She slid her arm through his, and drew the scientist towards her—yearning over him as a mother over an errant son. Edith and I, exchanging looks, managed to keep our faces solemn. It was clear to us that the desired end was in sight, that Marjorie had won at long, long last.

"And yet," said Locke, shaking himself as one emerging from a dream—he still retained her arm—"it goes

against the grain to leave him here. We shall need his reputation, his influence, his help. Try and imagine what one of us would feel like if left here alone. It's a sort of Paradise, but the mental atmosphere is too chilly. We must make one more effort to induce him to change his mind, to let himself be put under control. By the way, has anyone seen him since sunset yesterday?"

"No one has," I answered. "In fact, we've been so troubled, he was so queer in his manner, that we have made a lot of inquiries about him. For some obscure reason, the Ethmarians again profess to know nothing of his movements. I'm afraid he is brewing mischief and trouble once more."

"They profess to know nothing," echoed Locke. "That's strange — they are usually so transparently honest."

"Well, perhaps I put it crudely," I admitted. "I should have said they told me they had no news to give—that they were not telling me anything about him. Seems rather different, come to think of it."

"It does, and it bothers me," Locke remarked. "I'll do as Marjorie suggests. I'll go and see the Council, tell them we are ready, and find out all I can about Chalcote."

In less than an hour the scientist was back, and grave news was visible in his face.

"It's probably worse—and yet, perhaps, better—than we feared. Here is a letter from him, addressed to me. It is marked on the back of the envelope: 'To be read to the others when you have heard the news at 9-30.' It was given to me, at the Council offices, by a youngster, a flippant Modernist. 'This will set you going, I expect,' he laughed, as he handed it to me. Now, what are we going to hear at 9-30?"

"It's already 9-15," said Edith. "I think I know what the news will be. I have always thought the Professor was not really bad. No, I won't tell you what I think; I won't even whisper it to you, Mark."

We were sitting in the rest apartment that had been placed at our disposal in the home of Zeus. We drew our easy chairs together, expectantly facing the ornamental design on the wall, that concealed the loud speaker.

I don't think I've mentioned the constant service of news by radio that is broadcast over the whole of Ethmar, separately or in conjunction with the picture telegraph. My fault. I took it as a matter of course, as we do at home. Ethmar radio is perfect. Every home, every room in every house, every vehicle on land, sea or air is equipped with a crystal-clear automatic receiving apparatus. At the stated times, every person on Ethmar may hear the news without effort.

A carillon of silvery chimes heralded the half hour, and a pleasant voice announced:

"A period of magnetic disturbance begins tomorrow and will continue for a long period. No ill effects need be feared, as our climatologists are meeting with increased success in attracting violent storms to uninhabited regions.

"Yesterday, observatory No. 29 reported the discovery of a strange new line in the spectrum of Nebula 4066.

"Synthetic protein will shortly be available in bulk for transport to other worlds.

"Professor Chalcote, the most awkward member of the group of visitors from one of the rebel planets of sun No. A. 1622, has proved that he has learned wisdom at last. Alone, in a small vessel, he Passed Out this morning on Path 0505. He was quite calm, and left a letter to be handed to his friends. They will now be sent back to their own world, and the execution of the Council's decree will be delayed for fifty years.

"An ether wave from System R.339, decoded, stated that one hundred emigrants are waiting to be brought to Ethmar, and that . . ."

Edith sprang up and pulled out the switch.

"That will do," she cried. "Poor old Professor. I thought that was what he would do. What's in the letter?"

"I'll read it," said Locke. "Bear with me if I break down. After all, Andrea was a very dear enemy, as well as a lifelong friend."

This was Professor Chalcote's last message. It was characteristic of the man:

"To my friends and companions, and particularly to you, Austin. As you will soon know after you get this, I have Passed Out. I have gone on the journey to nothingness. But will it be nothingness? I've got plenty of food and water and the air renewal will last me years. I shall keep alive as long as I can. Who can tell where I may go, what may happen? I didn't warn you beforehand, because you would have tried to stop me, and my mind is set. (At least, I hope it is my mind; I hope they haven't planted the idea on me. I think not.)

"It's the best way out. After Errangia showed me the way, I felt it was the only decent thing to do. You won't be hampered with me any longer. I couldn't live comfortably amongst these smug supermen. Try and forgive me for having been such a tartar—and if you don't, it doesn't matter. I'm not really sorry for what I did that night in your laboratory; I wouldn't have missed what I've seen for anything. Well, I'm off, and good luck to you all. I expect you will be back at home, astonishing the natives, in a few months. I shall be—where?

ANDREA CHALCOTE."

We sat a few moments, too full for words.

"Poor old Professor," said Edith, again. There seemed nothing else to say. That summed up all our feelings.

Into our saddened silence came Zeus, preceding his entry by the door chimes.

"My friends," he said, "I have grave news for you—urgent commands from the Great Council."

CHAPTER XXIX

From the Shore of the Golden Sea

WE knew, before he spoke, what it was that he had come to tell us.

"The Council have consulted again, without a formal meeting," he said. "They have decided that you must return at once. Your visit has served all its useful purposes; your presence is now merely disturbing. All arrangements have been made. The space-ship has been prepared and has all its stores within. Our experts have spent much time on its equipment, and there can be no failure. Traveling faster than you came, you will only take three of your weeks on the journey."

"Shall we be ill again?" asked Edith.

"That I am afraid even our science cannot prevent. But it will pass and you will reach your planet safely."

"And the vessel?" Locke queried. "Cannot we retain it? Could we not send others here—to learn from you?"

"The Council is firm on that point. You will not be allowed any aid to your story, you will not take with you any machine, plans or formulas. The vessel itself, within one hour of landing, will start on its return journey. The hour is to allow for any slight error in the time calculation, and for you to get out safely."

"One thing I think you've overlooked," said Marjorie, knitting her brows. "Supposing we fall into the sea? Even if we floated on the surface we might not be seen and rescued in time."

"That has been foreseen," answered Zeus. "The

globe will stop at the distance from the centre that Mr. Chalcote told us was your sea-level. It will float with its outlet uppermost. An unsinkable raft, with lockers for your remaining stores, is in the globe. But we think that, starting soon from this position on Ethmar, you will fall upon one of the great land-masses of your world."

"Soon? When must we start?"

It was Locke who asked the question, and the reply of Zeus came quickly.

"Immediately after sunrise."

"Immediately after sunrise?" we cried. "After sunrise—now—at once?"

"At once," said Zeus. "I came to tell you this—to see you go—and to bid you farewell."

For the first time since meeting him, we heard a quiver, a hesitation, in his words.

Our heart sank, the air went chill. We had known we must go, we had wished to go, we wanted to see the earth again, we felt out of place in this super-world; yet now we must leave, we were loath to start. We resented being driven out of this Paradise. We wished to see just a little more of these wonder-people, absorb a little more of their learning, enjoy just a little longer the glorious rising and setting of their blue and golden sun.

"We must pack and dress—we can't go like this! We haven't a minute to spare," cried the girls, in sudden dismay.

"Even that will be easy. In the space-ship you will find boxes of dresses such as you wore when you came, copied from them by our artisans. There are also clothes for the men," said Zeus, gravely. "For that you must thank the memory of Errangia. She thought of all those things before she Passed Out. I will now leave you. In an hour I will be here with an air-vessel to take you to your ship."

We were a very quiet quartette whilst we gathered our few personal belongings, and took a last look around the spacious apartments in which we had spent so many nights of happiness and wonder. We felt that the roots of our souls were being wrenched out of very pleasant ground.

Punctually to the moment, Zeus reappeared and led us to the airship. We flew over the brightening landscape towards Cuidades, passing over the Council House as the first rays of dawn tipped the towers with rosy fire. We sank to a lawn before a pillared house, and on the lawn saw the black metal globe in which we were to be hurled back across the universe.

So important were we, so great was the interest we had roused that a group of four people waited to see us go. Though all Ethmar knew of our departure, there were thus only five people who cared enough to say good-bye, to lay their hands upon our shoulders for the last time.

We tried to imitate the stoic calm of their faces, but I am afraid we failed. The pang of parting from this Mother-World of the human race was a very real pang to us all. We spoke the last words with as much composure as we could, and stepped into the space-ship.

Austin Locke was the last to enter. With him came Zeus, for a final glance to see that everything was in order.

"All is correct," said our host. "You will have no trouble, all you will need is patience. I wish that I might go with you, to see your world, to help you, but it is forbidden. You and yours must work out your own destinies. One thing I am permitted to tell. The Council is deeply impressed by the sacrifice of Professor Chalcote, and their ultimate decision may be influenced by it. And a word of warning: be sure to leave the ship as quickly as you can after it has landed. Now the time has come. On this material plane we shall meet no more. Farewell—farewell."

He placed his hands on our shoulders in turn, coming last to Austin Locke. Those two looked long into each other's eyes before they parted.. A real friendship had knit them together.

Then Zeus walked firmly to the door and let himself sink to the ground. Locke buried his face in his hands.

One glimpse of the scene I had ere the door closed. Before us rose the pillared house, gleaming white against a background of dark trees; beyond, the sky was bright with the blue radiance of the dawn. On the right lay the far stretching plain of the country, watched over by the spinning discs of the picture telegraph; to the left, beyond the groves of aromatic shrub, we caught the glitter of the golden sea lapping the yellow sands.

A final wave of hands, and the door shut us in, shut us into the semi-darkness of an interior lit by a single window. We felt the globe rise, we hung for a moment over the sea of gold; for a moment we looked back at the house of pillars and the group of five indistinct figures standing on the lawn; then abruptly everything vanished from our sight.

Ethmar fell away beneath us, a roar of sound shook the drums of our ears, a wave of heat passed through us. Then, as once more we pased from a planet's atmosphere into the dark and airless abyss between the stars, we were enwrapped in a silence more terrible than any sound.

The vessel gathered speed, Sun DX 1490 and all its planets vanished, leaving us alone in darkness absolute.

CHAPTER XXX

The Promise of the Dawn

I WILL not go into the details of that monotonous return. It was much the same as the outward voyage, though this time we knew the journey's end, and had confidence in a successful arrival. The sickness came and passed, the chronometer-measured time passed on with maddening slowness.

At the end of three weary weeks we entered the earth's atmosphere with a crash of sound and a spasm of heat. We came to rest, with only a slight shock, on solid ground.

"We are on land, at any rate," said Locke, and flung open the door.

We sprang out and stretched our tired limbs. It was exhilarating to walk about on mother earth again, after our long confinement in that metallic shell.

The landscape was bare and dreary, seen in the twilight that lay upon it, but a glow, that visibly brightened as we looked, tinted a portion of the sky.

"Near sunrise," Locke said. "That will be the east, then. There are the stars of the Southern Cross, so we are south of the Equator—somewhere in South Africa, South America, or Australia. Was that a dog barking?"

We listened eagerly, but for a time could hear no sound of animal or human life. Then again came the bark, the yelping bark of a dog, distinct in the thin, morning air.

"That locates us," said I, with memories of a world trip I had taken two years before. "We are in the Australian bush, probably in North Victoria. That was a yelp of a dingo, the wild dog of Australia."

"Then we can't be far from a sheep run of some sort," said Majorie, the practical. "We shall be discovered soon, I expect. Now let us get busy taking our belongings out of the shell. You know what Zeus told us. We have only an hour."

"It is not too late to try and keep it here—to try and find its mechanism—upset its timing device," I ven-

tured. "It would be very useful to us."

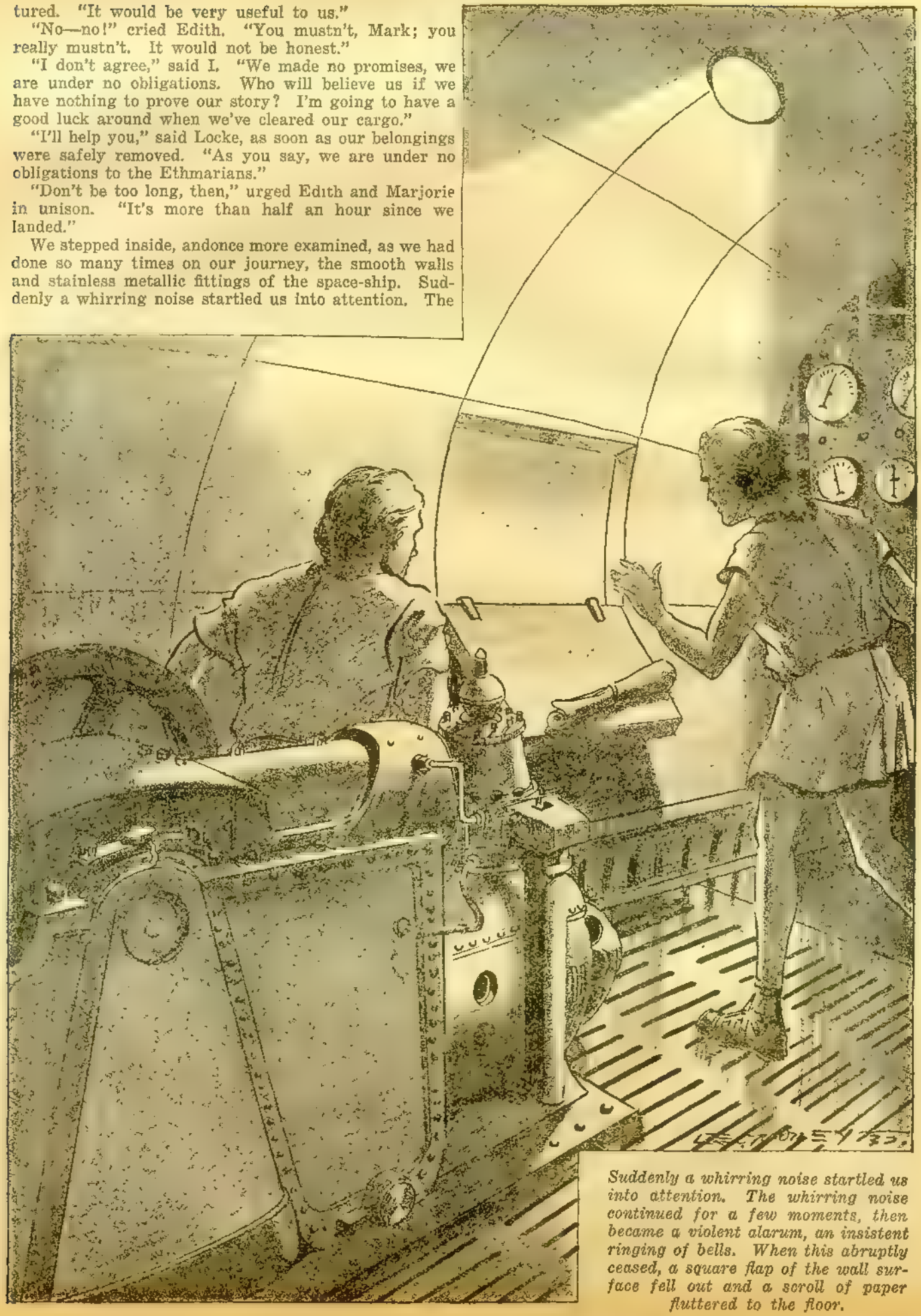
"No—no!" cried Edith. "You mustn't, Mark; you really mustn't. It would not be honest."

"I don't agree," said I. "We made no promises, we are under no obligations. Who will believe us if we have nothing to prove our story? I'm going to have a good luck around when we've cleared our cargo."

"I'll help you," said Locke, as soon as our belongings were safely removed. "As you say, we are under no obligations to the Ethmarians."

"Don't be too long, then," urged Edith and Marjorie in unison. "It's more than half an hour since we landed."

We stepped inside, andonce more examined, as we had done so many times on our journey, the smooth walls and stainless metallic fittings of the space-ship. Suddenly a whirring noise startled us into attention. The



Suddenly a whirring noise startled us into attention. The whirring noise continued for a few moments, then became a violent alarum, an insistent ringing of bells. When this abruptly ceased, a square flap of the wall surface fell out and a scroll of paper fluttered to the floor.

whirring noise continued for a few moments, then became a violent alarm, an insistent ringing of bells. When this abruptly ceased, a square flap of the wall surface fell out and a scroll of paper fluttered to the floor.

"A last message," cried Locke, picking it up. "Written in Ethmarian. It—get out, Mark! Get out—as quick as you can. Don't stop to talk—get out!"

We ran for the doorway and leapt to the ground. The girls came towards us, but Locke motioned them back, his arms going like flails.

"Get away—get away, all of you," he shouted, herding us off. "Get away as far as you can."

"What is it—what has frightened you—what is there in that paper?" asked Marjorie. "Let me see it."

"Here you are then. Read it—read it out to us."

Marjorie took the crumpled roll from the scientist's hand.

"It's a message from Zeus," she said.

"To my friends. Do not stay in the ship a moment after you receive this warning. At the last, the Council decided not to run any risk of the ship being detained on your world. They realized that the temptation would be great, and that mechanical means might be used to keep the vessel even when its own power would have caused it to return. Therefore a quantity of the disintegrator was stored in the wall, and this will be automatically released soon after the warning alarm is given. Once more, farewell."

We stood, in awed silence, looking at the space-ship—a grey metal globe, blackened and scarred and furrowed with its long journey through clouds of star dust and meteoric stones—and as we looked, its death came upon it.

It seemed as though a window were pierced from within, as though a star of flame were bursting out through the thickness of its walls. The starry flame spread, silently, noiselesly, but with a vivid intensity that seared our eyeballs, until the whole globe was a blaze of light. We had to retire from the glare and the heat, shading our eyes with our hands.

Then, as quickly as it had begun, the flame sank and expired. We looked again, incredulous. There was nothing left to see. The parched grass where the ship had rested was a circle of warm and blackened turf, and there was a little heap of grey dust. A pungent, acrid aroma hung in the air. That was all. The ship had vanished—disintegrated into its atoms—nay, into the very electrons of which its atoms had been composed.

"The Ethmarians are very thorough," said Marjorie.

There was nothing more to say or do. Feeling numbed and helpless, we made a perfunctory meal of the chemical food we had brought with us, and then with our field-glasses, scanned the dreary horizon. We now made out moving specks in several places, and at last saw a horseman, a typical Australian squatter, riding straight towards us from the east.

We were seen. It was only a matter of time and trouble before we were back at home.

Our great adventure was safely over; we had crossed the universe and returned to tell the story. We were now on the threshold of a harder trial, a greater adventure; we had to convince a sceptical world of the truth of our story, we had to save our rebel race from doom. Should we be equal to the task?

The breaking of the dawn, out of which the bush-ranger was riding towards us, seemed to answer our unspoken questions with a silent promise.

"As the night clouds hurry away, and the sunlight floods the sky, so shall our message transform the world," said Locke, quietly but earnestly; and to us, in that moment, his declaration was neither boastful nor theatrical.

Afterword

THE world knows our story now, and our mission. Everything that has happened to us since we landed is now so well known that there is no need for me to go over it all again.

Our task has proved harder than we feared in our most pessimistic moods. We have interested and aroused a few of the people who matter, but the sceptics and scoffers are in the majority. All that they will admit is that we four, with Professor Chalcote, vanished from Locke's laboratory when the place was wrecked by some sort of explosion, and that we turned up again two years later—*minus* Chalcote—in Australia.

(Dr. MacEarn and Roy Ormond—who were in the laboratory at the time of our departure, it will be remembered—were not killed as we had feared. They had only been slightly injured by the falling fragments of the shattered roof; and they are now our most ardent supporters.

People have asked Locke why he does not make another Spheroid and demonstrate his discovery, but he resolutely turns all such suggestions down, until mankind has progresed sufficiently to be trusted with such powers, should such powers be placed in its hands.

So for the benefit of the great public who do not know what to think about the matter, I have written this account of our great journey. I have told all that can be told, without reserve, without sparing myself or my co-travelers or hiding any of our failings; and we hope that, cast in this form, the truth will be read everywhere—if only at first for its novelty and interest, for its own sake in the end.

Marjorie's enthusiasm never flags, and she inspires her clever husband when his energy falters. Edith—my wife—is my star too, but I confess that I often despair of my fellow beings, and doubt whether earthly humanity will become worthy to be welcomed into the Stellar Commonwealth within the next two and a half centuries, for that is the allotted time by earth years.

And again the drab moods pass.

It may seem an impossible task—to regenerate a world—to make mankind logical and altruistic—to turn their thoughts to the sky rather than to their own petty personal concerns. Yet is it so hopeless? Is it even necessary? Will not Time itself do the work for us?

Think how short a period has elapsed since the Stone Age, since the brute force Empires, since the days of slavery. We have traveled fast and far even in historic time, and we are becoming more social, more mutually dependent, mutually helpful, at an increasing rate. It may be that the respite we have gained will be in itself sufficient to save the world from extinction.

In another two and a half centuries shall we surely be worthy of our place in the universe?

I hope and believe we shall, and on clear nights I gain strength and inspiration from the jewelled sky. Those silent stars, so far away, lighting thousands of worlds on which our kindred live—they cheer me with their shining, they repeat the golden promise of that bright Australian dawn.

THE END

Celestial Pioneers

By J. G. Ohmert

WE are sure many of our readers in their childhood days have enjoyed the story of the Swiss Family Robinson. Here we have a series of episodes carried out in the celestial world a captivating picture of the colonization of the planet Mars.

JOHN STANTON sat back from the cluttered workbench in his small laboratory and gazed with incredulous eyes at the phenomenon before him. The spectacle of a steel bar ten inches long and weighing several pounds floating two feet above the bench was almost unbelievable. Though he had worked every minute of his spare time for several years to produce that effect, his senses calloused by repeated failures were slow to grasp the fact that he had succeeded.

Until now, the full realization of the stupendous possibilities of the thing he had discovered had not dawned on him. He had been too busy, in his endeavor to attain the end, to speculate greatly on what such a discovery might mean to the world. Now, as he leaned back and beheld the indisputable evidence that he had discovered a force, a controllable force, counter to gravity, his mind's eye unfolded to him a cinematographic picture of a complete revolution in things mechanical, especially in aviation. The changes it might bring about in the production of power, in transportation and warfare, would be so great and far-reaching, as to cause a complete change in human affairs; to usher in a new era. Time ceased to be a factor in Stanton's life as he visualized the ramifications of his discovery, as it might work changes in political power, commercial supremacy and social well being. Yet through it all one disquieting thought persisted: "My demonstration is an unqualified success from a laboratory standpoint, but is not practical on a large scale. There yet remains much to be accomplished before these things may come to be."

Taking himself back from his visions, he leaned toward the bench and took stock of the reality before him. From the steel bar wound with many turns of fine wire floating in midair, his eyes followed two wires which extended from it to a rheostat on the bench, thence to a contrivance resembling an electric battery. There his eyes rested and his mind concentrated. The battery was at once the keystone of the whole apparatus and the impractical part. The battery produced a current similar to electricity in many respects, but quite different in others, the one great difference being that when this new current, which he had named X-tricity, was passed through a coil of wire wound around a steel bar, it set up a force in the bar, which caused the earth to repel the bar instead of attracting it; whereas, a current of electricity, when passed through the coil caused the bar to become magnetic.

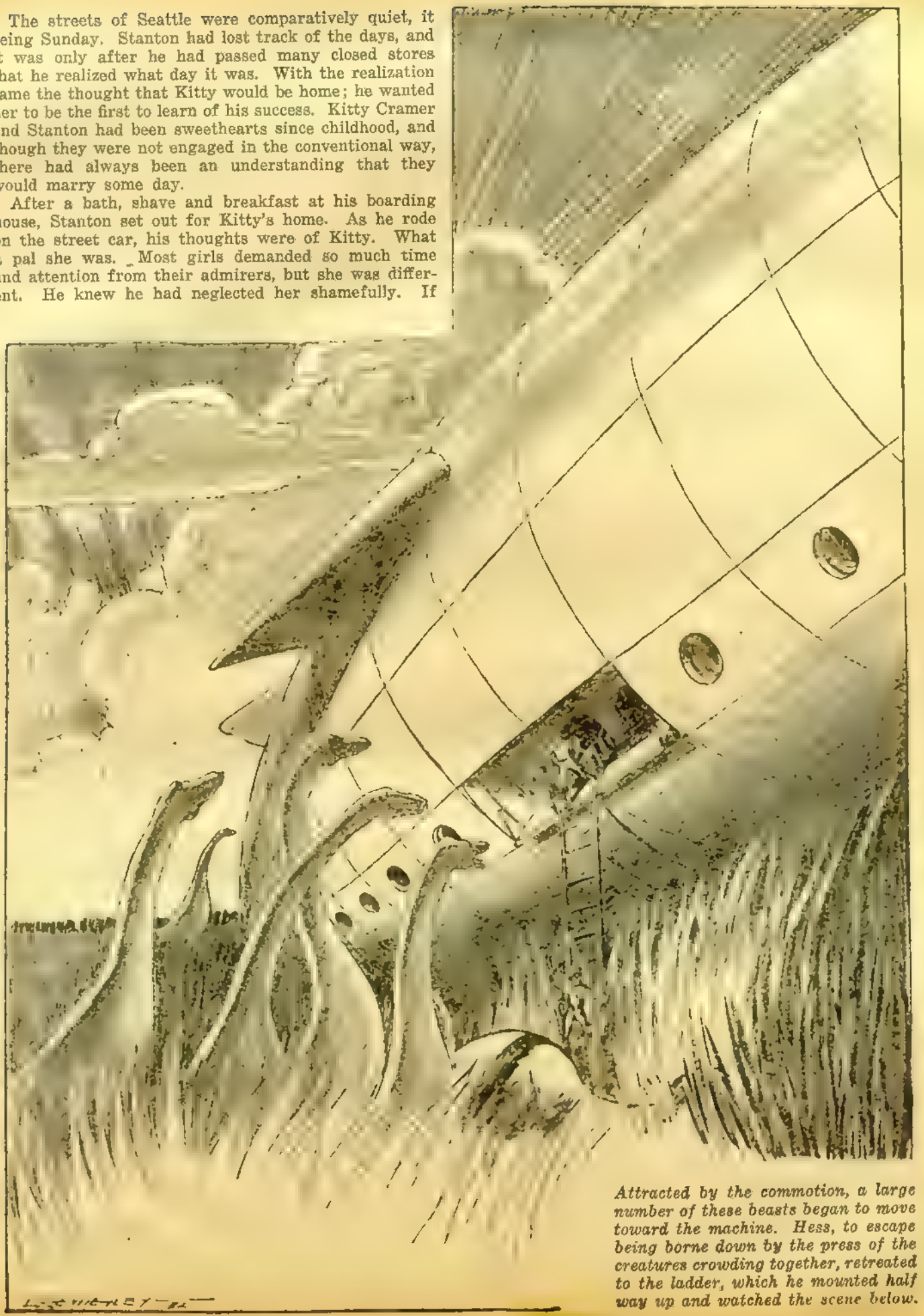
"Yes," he mused, "I have discovered a force counter to gravity, but X-tricity, like electricity, can not be produced, for practical purposes and on a large scale, by means of a battery. Some mechanical means for the production of X-tricity must be found, but that requires a knowledge of engineering, and possession of money, in both of which I am sadly lacking. The one, I might obtain by study, but the other . . . ? 'As these thoughts passed through his mind, he moved the handle of the rheostat back and forth and watched the bar fall and rise as the current was decreased and increased.

Stanton gradually cut off the current, allowing the bar to descend to the bench; slowly, softly as a bit of thistledown it came to rest. He slumped down into his chair; his chin rested on his chest. He began to realize that he was tired of thinking, that he was weary in body and that he was hungry. He could not remember when he had last eaten a square meal or slept in a bed; days, perhaps weeks. And this was the way he was spending his vacation. Could he ever go back to the grind again after this? And yet he must. Physical reaction from the long strain and the mental letdown following his success overcame him and he slept.

The morning sun shining through the window awoke Stanton. He sat for a few minutes with head bowed in his hands, while he collected his scattered wits, then rose stiffly and left, without even a glance around his laboratory.

The streets of Seattle were comparatively quiet, it being Sunday. Stanton had lost track of the days, and it was only after he had passed many closed stores that he realized what day it was. With the realization came the thought that Kitty would be home; he wanted her to be the first to learn of his success. Kitty Cramer and Stanton had been sweethearts since childhood, and though they were not engaged in the conventional way, there had always been an understanding that they would marry some day.

After a bath, shave and breakfast at his boarding house, Stanton set out for Kitty's home. As he rode on the street car, his thoughts were of Kitty. What a pal she was. Most girls demanded so much time and attention from their admirers, but she was different. He knew he had neglected her shamefully. If



Attracted by the commotion, a large number of these beasts began to move toward the machine. Hess, to escape being borne down by the press of the creatures crowding together, retreated to the ladder, which he mounted half way up and watched the scene below.

Kitty felt neglected, she never gave any evidence of it. Many nights when Stanton should have been at her home, Kitty came to his laboratory to watch him work. She always showed the deepest interest and had offered some valuable suggestions. She was a wireless operator, and it was said of her that she knew as much about wireless as her chief. Several times when Stanton would have been obliged to postpone his experiment because of lack of funds, Kitty had insisted on loaning him money with which to carry on. Stanton considered Kitty his collaborator and meant that she should share honors equally with him. He wished her to be the first to learn of their success and he needed her counsel and advice in regard to the future of the work.

The moment Kitty saw Stanton she said: "You are the bearer of good news. You have succeeded."

"Yes," Stanton replied, "but say WE have succeeded."

"No, I have contributed nothing of value to your discovery."

"You have helped more than you realize. But for you, I should have given up long ago. You have not only made valuable suggestions, but you have been my inspiration. The fact that Nature has at last yielded up her most cherished secret, is as much attributable to your help and moral support as to my work. Whether you wish it or not, it is a matter of simple justice that you share equally with me in this discovery. I need your advice about the future of the work."

Stanton explained to Kitty that their discovery was far from being practical, that much more labor and money must be expended before they could hope to reap any benefit from it. "I am willing to work my head off, but I haven't the engineering ability to carry on efficiently and would only waste money if I had it," Stanton said.

"Can't we interest capital; form a stock company as they are doing with wireless?" Kitty queried.

"I'm afraid not," Stanton replied. "You see wireless has passed the experimental stage, and has demonstrated that it is a dividend-earner. It was not so easy to raise money for wireless installations a few years ago. While our discovery opens up vast possibilities in many fields, I believe its contribution to aviation will prove the most valuable of all. Just at present, big money looks on aviation as visionary, and all who are working along that line are finding it difficult to finance their experiments. To bring our principle of aerial navigation to perfection would require a much greater outlay than would either of the methods now being tried; millions in fact. Nor is that all; it would require engineering ability of the highest order, and courage to pioneer in a field as virgin as was railroading a hundred years ago. Moneyed men are not visionary nor are they gamblers. One would need to be a gambler to risk such a stake, even with the possibility of winning the vast fortune the success of our discovery would bring to aviation. Then there is the chance of our losing out entirely if we share our secret with others."

"That is where our gambling blood comes in; we must take that chance," Kitty replied. "Of course we must protect ourselves with patents, and take every precaution to guard any unpatented secret. While you were talking just now, a name kept coming to me almost like an inspiration. Do you remember telling me about Martin Hess, the young man who was one of your instructors, during the few months you were able to study electrical engineering at Chicago before your father's death? You said that he had taken a very friendly interest in you, and you had often discussed the possibility of overcoming gravity, and by employing some new principle, navigating not only the atmosphere of the earth, but the ether beyond as well. That at times he was very serious about it, and at other times was inclined to tease you about trying to lift yourself by your bootstraps. You told me, too, that he fell heir to a large fortune a few years ago, and that he was devoting both it and his time to scientific research. It occurs to me, that he is a man who could supply all that we lack, and one who might be visionary enough and gambler enough to put in with us."

Stanton did not reply for some time, but sat in deep thought. Finally he said, "Martin Hess. Had he made the discovery, he would certainly be in a position to carry the experiment very far indeed. I run across his name every little while in the scientific journals. He is here and there all over the world, wherever the paths of scientific research lead. I wonder where he is now?"

"Could we interest him, do you think?" Kitty asked.

"It is a mighty good suggestion, and we can try. I'll try to locate him and take the matter up with him," Stanton replied.

They talked long and built many aircastles. It was late that night that Stanton returned to his boarding house to sleep and dream of flying.

One day early in the last week of Stanton's vacation, he answered a ring at the telephone to hear Kitty's voice. She was evidently trying to suppress excitement as she said: "Have you a 'Seattle Times' there?" Stanton replied that he had. "Then look on the first page, third column and read a news item there. I'm coming right down to your lab; if the chief will let me off; we're terribly busy." With that she hung up and Stanton found the paper.

Searching for the item indicated by Kitty, his eye caught the headline, "NOTED SCIENTIST IN SEATTLE EN ROUTE TO ORIENT." The gist of the item was that a party of scientists, one of whom was Martin Hess, were at the Washington Hotel and would sail for the Orient in two days. Stanton had scarcely digested these facts when Kitty burst into the room. Her cheeks were flushed, eyes bright and she was out of breath with much excitement. "Did you find the item?" She asked almost before she had entered the door. "He is here, right here in Seattle. Maybe I'm superstitious, but it looks to me as if the hand of Providence was in this. Call it superstition if you want to, but to me it is a hunch. Go and see him right away."

Stanton, who was cautious by nature, did not share Kitty's enthusiasm. "But do we really wish to take anyone in with us; to share our secret even with him?" Stanton asked.

"I thought we had settled that. What else can we do? Haven't you often said that ideas are in the air, under pressure as it were, seeking expression, seeking to be born into the world through the brain of some genius, and that if these ideas fail to find complete expression through one genius they will seek elsewhere? Our idea is only partly expressed, and here comes our chance to enlist the aid of someone to help us carry on. Where is your gambling blood now? We must take this chance or run the risk of some one else getting the idea."

Stanton stood with his back against the bench, arms folded and head bowed in deep thought. A struggle was going on in his mind, a struggle between his natural caution and Kitty's enthusiasm. He knew that her judgment, her intuition, or whatever it was, had been sound many times, but this was, by far, the greatest crisis of his life, of their lives. What to do; what to do.

Kitty moved close to him, placed her hands on his

shoulders and looked into his eyes. The fifteen minutes absence from the office which she had almost begged the chief to grant her, was slipping rapidly away. She did not wish to rush Stanton and yet she wanted his answer before she returned to her work. When, at last, it seemed that she must speak and urge him further or go without his answer, she saw a light come into his eyes. He placed his hands on her shoulders and said:

"I'll take a chance on your hunch, Kitty."

Kitty glanced at her watch. She barely had time to reach the office. "Promise me that you will go to see him at once, now."

Stanton promised. Kitty pecked a kiss on his cheek and fled before he could stop her.

Stanton slowly drew off his coveralls, found his hat and reluctantly left the laboratory. He knew he must go at once, if at all, before his courage, or as he frankly admitted to himself, Kitty's courage, failed him.

It had always been hard for Stanton to meet people. Although he and Hess had been good friends at one time, Hess' rise in the scientific world and his great wealth seemed to raise a barrier between them. Stanton chose to walk as it would give him more time to think. How should he approach Hess who was the most approachable man he had ever known? How revive in his mind the memory of their one time friendship when they were teacher and pupil five years ago? Of course, Hess would not remember him, one of a hundred pupils, after all these years. He recited to himself several little speeches as he walked along, but none of them met with his approval, and he was still without a verbal means of approach, when he had reached the hotel and sent up his name.

Mr. Hess would see him at once, and as Stanton walked along the corridor to Hess' room, his throat felt dry, his ears big and red and his hat was in the way. Stanton opened the door with an effort to Hess' bid to enter. His tongue clove to the roof of his mouth. Had anyone cried, "Scat!" he would have fled precipitately.

Hess came swiftly across the room with hand outstretched. He greeted Stanton heartily:

"Well, well, if it isn't my boy who was always trying to lift himself by his bootstraps. But tell me, have you succeeded in making Nature disgorge her most cherished secret?"

Stanton taken aback by Hess' gusty greeting found himself no more at ease than before. Hess seeing Stanton's discomfiture, and thinking it due to his joke about the bootstraps, hastened to say:

"But there, there, never mind. I have spent much time and money trying to do the same thing. Much more time and money than I care to think about. How long has it been since we walked by the lake and speculated on the possibility of finding gravity's counterforce? Ninety-six, was it not? five years ago; that brings us to nineteen-one does it not? Yes. Wireless was in the experimental stage then. But tell me, what have you been doing all these years? Have a seat and help yourself to the stogies."

During the lighting-up process, Stanton found time to study his one-time instructor. He found him to be the same plump, jovial, energetic person as of yore. He wore his hair and beard in the style of '96. There was a sprinkling of gray, but, otherwise, he appeared much as he had five years before. After Stanton had expressed his pleasure at meeting Hess again, he said:

"I have not succeeded in lifting myself by my bootstraps, but I have succeeded in making Nature disgorge her most cherished secret; in part at least. I have spent much of the past five years in that pursuit, and as to the degree of my success, I shall leave that to your judgment after you have examined my work. That is: if you would care to accompany me to my lab." Stanton spoke rapidly, trying to control his excitement.

Hess was on his feet instantly, pacing rapidly. His eyes snapped like electric arcs. He seemed scarcely able to wait until Stanton finished speaking.

"Do you mean to say that you have found a force which counteracts gravity even in the slightest degree?" His excitement was quite evident.

Stanton replied: "Yes, and to more than a slight degree. But come to my lab; one demonstration is worth more than any quantity of talk."

Hess picked up his hat. "Yes, you are right. Let's go," he said.

At the hotel entrance they hailed a cab, and in ten minutes were at Stanton's laboratory. He escorted Hess to the bench where his apparatus stood. He turned on the current and moved the handle of the rheostat slowly through the sweep of its arc. The steel bar rose higher and higher until it was checked in its ascent by the wires which attached it to the rheostat. Stanton then reversed the motion of the rheostat handle and the bar descended again to the bench.

Martin Hess stood as one in a trance, staring at the seemingly incredible phenomenon. He went up to the bench and extended a hand toward the rheostat; then turning to Stanton, said:

"With your permission."

"As often as you like," Stanton replied.

Martin Hess seated himself, and for a long time put the bar through its motions. At length he rose and with hands clasped behind his back, paced to and fro the length of the room. As he arrived at the bench each time, he stood for a moment frowning down at the apparatus. He kept this up for some minutes and Stanton would have given much to be able to read Hess' mind. Hess again seated himself at the bench and, with hands clasped behind his head, stared out through a window. He seemed to have forgotten Stanton and Stanton was careful not to disturb his revery. Hess turned suddenly and asked: "How much will the bar lift?" He shot the question at Stanton like a command.

Stanton replied: "When the battery was at full strength, I placed a bar of equal weight on the platform of a scales, then attached it to the energized bar with a short cord. When I applied the full strength of the current, the bar on the scales weighed just nothing."

"That is," Hess shot back, "if the bar on the scales had been a few ounces lighter, it would have been lifted clear of the scales and to a height limited only by the length of the wires."

"Exactly." Stanton replied.

Hess again lapsed into silence broken only by an occasional mumbled comment as he almost thought aloud. Time sped on. Stanton waited patiently.

"Your battery and the current it produces," Hess broke the silence abruptly, "is, of course, the important thing. I have no idea of its construction or principle, and you, of course, do not wish to reveal these at this time. It does not matter; I have no desire to know." Silence for a time and then:

"Um, yes. I take it that this new current, this X-tricity, as yau call it, like electricity, cannot be produced economically on a large scale by means of a battery."

"I am convinced that it cannot," Stanton replied.

"As it stands now, the value of your discovery depends on whether the use to which it may be put would

make a return sufficient to offset the cost of generating the current and to leave a margin of profit."

"Exacctly," replied Stanton.

"Have you made an attempt to generate this current by mechanical means?"

"No, I have neither the knowledge nor the funds with which to carry on the work; nor have I had time even to plan how I might procure them, as I arrived at this stage of my work only a day or two ago."

Hess glanced at his watch. "It is lunch time. I make it a practice never to miss my meals no matter how busy I may be or how interesting my work. May I have the honor of being your host?"

"The honor is all mine, Mr. Hess."

"Shall we go then? yes?"

During lunch they did not mention Stanton's discovery. Hess talked of his work and travels during the past five years. After lunch, they went to the lobby where they smoked a stogy in silence. When Hess had finished his smoke, he rose and together they walked toward the hotel entrance. Hess extended his hand and grasped Stanton's as he said:

"It has been a great privilege, yes, a great honor to examine your work, and a real pleasure to see you again. I have an engagement at two. Will you meet me here again to-morrow morning at ten? I may have something more to say concerning your discovery at that time. Please rest assured that your secret is safe with me."

Stanton consented and left the hotel. He went at once to a telephone and called Kitty. He knew she would be anxiously waiting his report. Kitty's voice was eager:

"What did he say? I saw you going to lunch with him. You passed me and never saw me."

"How did you know it was he?" Stanton countered, avoiding her question.

"I phoned Tilly at the information desk at his hotel, and she described him. But you haven't answered my question."

"There is nothing definite as yet. He is interested all right. I'm to meet him again tomorrow. I'm coming out tonight; I want to talk things over before I see him again."

"O.K. To-night, then. Bye."

To Stanton, the hours dragged by on leaden feet until the time he might go to see Kitty. His mind was filled with disquieting thoughts: "After all, what did he know about Martin Hess further than that he was wealthy and a noted scientist? He had been a pleasant companion back there in Chicago, and had taken an especial interest in Stanton. Stanton had always considered Hess honest, possibly because he had thought him too wealthy to need anything. But in a matter as important as his discovery, he was not so certain. How much did Hess know about his battery? He had said that he knew and cared nothing about it, but Stanton believed that there was little of a scientific nature that Hess did not know, or might not at least make a guess at. Hess had said that he, too, had worked on the same problem and hinted at failure. Perhaps what he had learned from Stanton's experiment was what he needed to turn failure into success. He began to fear that he had acted in too great haste. Perhaps Hess' appearance in Seattle just at this time was not providential, but merely a coincidence.

Altogether, Stanton's mind was in a pretty uncertain state when he arrived at Kitty's home that evening. They talked long and earnestly. Kitty succeeded in banishing most of Stanton's fears. She appealed to his sporting blood. She recalled his promise to act on her hunch. She made such a good case for Hess, backed up by her instinctive ability to judge people, that when Stanton left her that night, he was ready to carry on and, come what might, to make the best of it.

Stanton was at the hotel promptly the next morning to keep his appointment with Hess. He half expected to find that Hess had left, yet he gave him credit for more fineness of method. There was no reason why Hess should flee like a thief in the night. He had only to stall Stanton off and then sail that evening for the Orient. Stanton turned at the sound of Hess' voice:

"Ah, on time to the second. That is good, yes. Shall we go to my room where we may talk undisturbed?"

Seated in Hess' room they lighted stogies and smoked in silence until the weeds were short. Then Hess rose and began to pace the floor. When he had finished smoking, he drew up a chair facing Stanton and frankly studied him for some minutes. Then shrugging his shoulders as though yielding to some impulse, he said:

"One never knows until one tries. Is it not so always? I said to you yesterday that I had spent much time on the same problem which you have solved so neatly. Um, yes, several years. But I worked along entirely different lines applying another principle and like you succeeded in producing a very satisfactory demonstration from a laboratory standpoint. So satisfactory, indeed, that I thought it advisable to go ahead on a large scale.

"Wishing to work in secret far from prying eyes, especially those of the press, I sought a place where I might build large shops, hangars, laboratories and the like, and also find adequate transportation facilities, no small problem in itself. However, I finally succeeded. I located and purchased an abandoned logging camp in the mountains some seventy miles from where we sit. The ground had been logged over and burned. Part of the logging equipment was still on the ground and was included in the sale, the most important piece of equipment being six miles of railroad, a locomotive capable of hauling on the heavy grades, and several cars. The road extends from the camp to a connection with a transcontinental road and affords the only means of ingress and egress to the property.

There I built my shops, laboratory, hangar and other buildings. I spared nothing on equipment. My plant was up to the minute in its day. I gave up my experiment about a year ago, but still have the plant.

I said the other day that I had spent much money on the problem, but I still have much left. More than I shall be able to use in my lifetime, and there are none to leave it to when I depart. Judging from past experience, I should estimate that, to bring your discovery to perfection, if even with the plant available, would entail an outlay of at least a million-and-a-half dollars. I spent more on mine. I have been thinking about your discovery during the past few hours, and though I so well know that a successful lab. test may mean little or nothing, I am ready to make you a proposition. It is this; in consideration of a half interest in your discovery, I will turn over my plant, furnish all money needed, even to the extent of my fortune, and give my entire time and knowledge to its development. I am taking a long chance, but I am something of a gambler at heart. Now, mind, I do not press you for an immediate answer. My vessel sails at midnight. If you accept, I will cancel my accommodations on the vessel even at the last minute."

Martin Hess' proposition left Stanton rather dazed and he could scarcely find words to express his appre-

ciation. He told Hess about Kitty and her interest in the discovery. He said he wished to talk Hess' proposition over with her, before he gave him his answer. They made an appointment for six that evening, and Hess said to Stanton: "Bring the young lady with you when you come." They parted, then, and Stanton hurried to a telephone to tell Kitty of Hess' offer.

Kitty had the afternoon off. They lunched together and then went to a park to talk and plan. They met Hess at his hotel at the appointed time. Hess invited them to dine with him. After dinner they went to Hess' rooms where they talked it all over, and Hess again made his proposition. Hess expressed no enthusiasm at Stanton and Kitty's acceptance and Stanton wondered whether a negative answer might not have pleased him as well. Hess was silent for some minutes and then his only remarks were:

"And now we have much before us to be done."

If he had been slow to speak, he was not slow to act. He picked up a telephone and for some time was busy cancelling his sailing accommodations, notifying his colleagues of his intention not to accompany them to the Orient, giving orders to his bankers and attorneys and inquiring the leaving time of trains. When he had finished, he laid before them an outline of their immediate program.

"It being convenient for you, we will go to the plant and thoroughly inspect it. In the meantime, my financial affairs will shape up so that we can make a thorough examination of my standing and ability in that line. As to my personal ability and the value of my services, you must judge for yourselves. Should you find all to your satisfaction, we will draw up the tightest contract ever conceived of by man. Then we shall be ready to begin in earnest."

When Stanton and Kitty had agreed to Hess' program, he said: "I have much to do today; meet me at the N. P. depot at seven-thirty to-morrow morning. Have a good sleep and let your mind rest. I never allow anything to interfere with my meals and sleep. 'Till morning then, yes?"

Stanton took Kitty home in a cab; he was nearly "broke," but felt that the occasion merited something out of the ordinary. They talked little, but thought much. Kitty would not accompany Stanton and Hess on the inspection trip. She planned to retain her position until their discovery was perfected. "For, of course, we are bound to win" she said.

Stanton went to his room and tried to put Hess' advice about sleep into practice, and though he wooed Morpheus with open arms, it was past midnight before he slipped into a quiet peaceful slumber. He awoke at daybreak much refreshed and more at peace than at any time since he first saw the steel bar rise from the bench.

At seven-thirty o'clock Stanton and Hess entrained for the plant in the mountains. When they were comfortably settled in the smoker with their stogies going, Hess was more talkative than usual. He launched into his subject without preliminaries, as was his habit.

"Aviation, yes, I see a great future for aviation. I saw the Wrights make their first successful flight. It was but a small beginning, and some of my colleagues seem to think it merely a fair lab test, and so it is; but, to me, one of promise. I can visualize a day, not many years hence, when travel and much freighting of merchandise will be carried on by airships. There is much to be done yet, yes. Motors must be greatly improved, we must learn more about the air and the shape of wings; but these things will be done and rapidly, too. Motors will be greatly improved in the development of the automobile. Automobiles must be brought to perfection before aviation receives much attention, but with the engineering knowledge thus obtained we shall be better fitted to develop the flying machine. The lighter-than-air machine will figure prominently in aviation and, in my opinion, will rival the heavier-than-air machine especially in the matter of long sustained flight." He fell silent for some time and watched the landscape rushing by. He resumed his discourse abruptly:

"But when both of these methods of flying have reached their ultimate stage of development, there will still be much to be desired. The lighter-than-air machine depends on a highly inflammable gas for its buoyancy; the great risk is obvious. However, an inert gas may be discovered which will eliminate that, but there still remains an inherent feature which is highly objectionable; the frail construction which, in the nature of things, is unavoidable. The heavier-than-air machine has no advantage over the gas-filled machine, as I see it. The airplane is dependent on the faultless operation of their motors to keep it afloat, and it must have prepared landing places. As to construction; the situation is the same. When all is said and done, these inherent features remain." He smoked a stogy before he resumed: "The next great war will be a different affair from any in the past; that is, if it is delayed until the automobile and flying machine have reached a practical stage of development. You express surprise at the mention of another war? The pacifists will get you, if you don't watch out. No, my boy, the Spanish-American war was not the last of wars, the pacificists to the contrary, notwithstanding. Man is a combative animal and, given nothing else to fight, will fight his fellow beings. Even peace becomes more intolerable than war. But give man an adversary big enough, one worthy of his steel, and he will join with his fellows against it. Fortunately, such an antagonist (I will not say foe) exists; it is Nature, she is jealous of her secrets and of the activities of civilized man. In science and in scientific research she finds a worthy advisary.

"Yes there will be more wars between nations, but wars of that nature will pass when man comes to recognize the benefits to be derived from wresting nature's secrets from her and turning them to his own uses. Then will the best inventive minds of the world turn to the fashioning of engines for the protection of life rather than for its destruction. In your discovery, I see the possibility of many mighty devices both for the benefit and destruction of mankind; but I think that far and away, its greatest field of usefulness is that of aviation.

"You have discovered the principle which, to my mind, is the only safe and practical means of aerial navigation; namely, levitation. A machine employing that principle would not inherit any of the objectionable features of the two now being developed. In fact I cannot visualize a single bad feature in connection with it. Such a machine would not be limited to the atmosphere of the earth, but would be capable of navigating space as well.

"However, we must not build our air-castles too high; if we are to wrest from nature her most cherished secret, we shall have our work cut out for us. We shall be pioneering in an entirely new field with little of past research to aid us; nothing, in fact, but the work you have already done. A slender beginning, but one with possibilities well worthy of the best efforts of man. If we can produce your new current by mechanical means and at a cost not prohibitive when balanced against the great usefulness of this new force, then, we shall have won. But, as I see it, that means years

of research and work with possible failure at the end. But we shall see, yes. We have time for a bite of lunch before we reach our siding; let's go."

They had just finished eating when a trainman appeared and said: "The next stop will be at your siding, Mr. Hess." A few minutes later they stood beside the track with the train rapidly receeding in the distance. There was no one in sight beside themselves. Hess turned toward a pair of rust covered rails which wound away up a heavily wooded canyon, which were soon lost to view.

"My man should have been here with the speeder," he said, "I wired him to meet this train. Hark! I hear him coming." Stanton listening heard a faint rythmic, metallic clicking which momentarily grew more audible and presently a small, gas-driven speeder appeared. The six miles to the plant were soon covered and Stanton found himself in an environment of mixed sylvan beauty and industrial practicability. They began at once the inspection of the plant. There was so much to be seen that at least another full day would be required to finish it. At six o'clock that evening, they turned their steps toward the caretaker's cottage where a sumptuous dinner awaited to assuage their appetites whetted to keenness by the rare atmosphere of a high altitude.

After dinner they strolled about enjoying the keen pure atmosphere until darkness shut out the woods and mountain tops. They retired to Hess' private cottage, where a fire of logs burned on the hearth. There was little conversation; but each had much food for thought.

After a daylight breakfast next morning they began their inspection in earnest. Stanton, of course, understood the laboratory and marveled at its completeness. With the shop and foundry equipment he was less familiar; but Hess so painstakingly explained each machine and device that Stanton acquired a full knowledge of them. The entire day was thus spent and that evening the speeder deposited them beside the main line to catch a train which would land them in Seattle before midnight.

The next two days were spent in checking Hess' financial assets and in drawing up a contract. At the end of that time Stanton and Kitty found themselves to be partners with Hess in a million dollar enterprise the future of which was very uncertain. Both they and Hess had staked their all on a gigantic gamble. A week later, when Hess had put his business affairs in shape, they packed Stanton's machine and personal effects and returned to the plant to begin an experiment which, in magnitude and absorbing interest, surpassed anything previously undertaken by man.

Once settled at the plant, Hess ordered various materials, and then went into retreat, as it were; he became a veritable sphynx. Hess spent practically all his waking hours in the laboratory; he withdrew so completely within himself that Stanton might as well have been partner to a mute.

Stanton was left largely to his own devices, how to occupy his time became a problem. Weeks went by with scarcely a word passing between them. Stanton occasionally ventured some remark only to be met with a vacant stare or a gruff, non-commital answer. This situation began to get on Stanton's nerves. As time passed with no change in Hess' manner, Stanton began to believe him almost demented.

Material of various kinds began to arrive at the plant, and with them came a grim silent man whose only recognition of an introduction to Stanton was a barely perceptible nod. Hess enveloped in coveralls went to the foundry with Graff the silent man, where for days they worked on something the nature of which was a puzzle to Stanton. From the foundry they took several castings to the shop where again for days they worked mysteriously in silence. Finally, the machined parts were taken to the laboratory where Hess, attended by Graff, worked over them for weeks.

Stanton began to amuse himself as best he could. He took long walks into the hills; sometimes alone and sometimes with Hannon, the caretaker whom Stanton found to be a congenial companion. Hannon had been with Hess during his former experimenting at the plant. He described, in his own way, the work Hess carried on there at that time: "Believe me!" he said at one time, "There was something doing here at the plant, then. The boss is some worker, some man." Stanton would not discuss Hess with Hannon, of course; but he would like to have asked whether Hess always behaved so peculiarly when he worked.

One of Stanton's diversions was to make the daily trip on the speeder with Hannon to the railroad junction. On one such occasion when Hess was making the trip, he took a seat beside Stanton and rode the entire six miles without speaking a word, in fact, he seemed entirely oblivious of Stanton's presence. The situation was fast growing intolerable to Stanton, and, had not the Hannons ministered to him with such kindness and understanding, he would have taken train to Seattle; back to his old job and laboratory. This condition of being left "out of it," humiliated him beyond words.

Several weeks after the machined castings had been taken to the laboratory, Stanton while strolling near a dump where discarded junk was deposited, saw the parts of the mysterious machine ignominiously reposing among the other junk.

Hess became more morose than ever, if that were possible. He spent much time strolling about the plant with head bowed in deep thought. Then one day Stanton missed seeing Hess about the plant. He inquired of Hannon if Hess were ill and was informed that Hannon had taken Hess to meet the east-bound train at midnight the previous day. Days passed, grew into weeks, the weeks into months and still Hess did not return. Nor did he communicate with anyone at the plant unless it were Graff, but Stanton could not bring himself to ask anything of that sphynx. Graff kept himself employed in the pattern shop and spoke to no one.

Stanton began to be genuinely worried about Hess. It was not the possible loss of his discovery which worried him most. He was sincerely worried about Hess. He felt that some action should be taken, but just what to do puzzled him. At last, driven by desperation, he took Hannon into his confidence.

Hannon brushed Stanton's fears lightly aside: "Now, Mr. Stanton," he advised, "don't you go worrying about the boss; he's that way when he's working. Queer, I called it when I first knew him. But we, the misses and me, never worry. He always turns up right as a trivet."

Stanton felt that he was being patronized by Hannon and was sore at himself for having given Hannon the opening. He felt, too, that he was being kept in the dark about something; that there was a conspiracy of some sort a-foot. But fret as he would, there seemed to be no way out. At last, being unable to stand the situation longer, he had Hannon take him to the junction where he took train for Seattle.

He wanted to talk things over with Kitty. They had communicated almost daily by phone, but this matter he did not wish to discuss over the phone. Kitty seemed as much puzzled as Stanton over Hess' con-

duct and the only reassurance she could offer was that she still felt that everything was all right—that she had always heard that men of Hess' genius were eccentric—that they could only trust to luck and make the best of it. Stanton remained in the city three days, but found himself little more at ease there than at the plant.

Still much down-in-the-mouth, he boarded a train for the plant. He was looking for a seat in the smoker when he came upon Hess smoking one of his stogies. Stanton was nearly taken off his feet when Hess sprang up, grasped his hand and greeted him jovially:

"Ah. The boy craves a little city life, it is not? Ja, dos is good, yes. How is everything at the plant?" Then without giving Stanton an opportunity to reply: "I have had a splendid trip, an amazing experience, yes. Dr. Coolidge. You know Coolidge, is it not? He has carried Roentgen's experiments away beyond Roentgen, yes; has done wonders with X-ray; with tubes in general. I got an idea there, but I was not satisfied, no. You do not know Bofferman, no. Few people do. He cares not for the gallery. He has his own lab in Bremen. He has been working with vacuum tubes for years, and has done some wonderful things; some almost unbelievable things. I had not seen him for several years, so I thought I might pick up an idea there. I learned there was a steamer sailing for Germany so I engaged passage. I remained with Bofferman six, um, well it does not matter. I picked up an idea there; *the* idea, um, yes. We may now go ahead with some definite end in view.

"I have been working quietly, lately, yes. I got off on the wrong foot there at the plant before I left; a small matter however. I did not wish to raise your hopes. In fact, I had little hope myself. Disappointments come hard to the young, but me; I am an old shellback, they run off like water, yes. But now, I think that we may hope with some degree of assurance that we may do something, at least. We must now add glassblowing and tube making to our lab. Through Bofferman I secured the services of an expert tube-maker. He is following bringing a complete outfit." And Stanton wondered if the tube-maker was another Sphynx.

"You will work with me from now on, since this will be more in your line. I tried to produce X-tricity with a machine simular to an electric dynamo, but had little hope of success in that direction from the start. I wanted to eliminate that at once and clear the way for what I had hoped would be successful, and which I feel now is almost certain of success.

It is like this: From the first, I felt that we had two courses open to us: The one: to produce X-tricity directly by mechanical means, and the other: to convert an electric current of very high frequency into X-tricity. Since studying the advances made in vacuum tubes in the past few years. I am almost certain our road to success lies in the latter plan, using a vacuum converter of some sort. Just what it will be only extensive experiments can reveal. Now that you have had a good rest and time to adjust yourself to your new environment, you will be ready for some gruelling work, yes." Hess lit a stogy and relapsed into silence.

Stanton's mind went whirling back over the last few months: "So that was it? Hess had been trying to shield him, and had driven him almost to desparation in the doings. Well, one thing was certain; he would never let Hess' moods worry him again."

The detailed record of the next year's experiments filled many pages. They tried tubes filled with this and that, tried cathodes and anodes of many inds; tried many, thousands, of combinations working mostly in the dark without data of any kind. Stanton thought he had worked, but to see Hess in action was a revelation.

When at last success crowned their efforts, it went beyond their fondest hopes. Stanton's elation knew no bounds. But Hess, old warhorse that he was, seemed to consider it only an incident in the day's work. "Ja, dos is good," he said, "but we are not out of the woods yet, no. We must learn how to store up this current, and here we may learn something from your battery. Then, too, we must devise a motor which will operate by means of X-tricity. Ja, we have much yet to do."

The end of another year of hard, exciting, intriguing work brought success in both a storage battery for X-tricity and a motor to operate on the new current. The battery gave them the greater tussle. The motor was comparatively simple. Their first motor consisted of a number of steel bars weighing fifty pounds each, mounted on rods which projected radially from a central shaft; the whole having the appearance of a squirrel cage and so they named it. The steel bars were wound with wire after the manner of magnets. Through a commutator on the shaft X-tricity was led to the coils in such a manner that only half of the coils were energized at any time. Thus the bars on the energized side lifted with a force equal to fifty pounds each by means of levitation while the bars on the unenergized side were drawn downward by gravity with a force of fifty pounds each. This made a sweet-running motor which consumed X-tricity over only half of the circle.

This motor driving an electric dynamo of very high frequency passed the current through tube converter thus producing X-tricity which might be stored or used for other purposes.

One peculiar feature of this generating set which Hess found hard to explain, and which made the apparatus such a perfect producer of power, was that the converter, unlike an electric converter in which a loss of power occurs, actually gained in power. This removed it from the perpetual motion class and gave a surplus of power for other uses than generating current. Hess believed that the breaking down of atoms in the converter accounted for the surplus, but they did not go onto that, being satisfied to let it stand as they found it.

The converter was, of course, the keystone of the power plant and they took steps to guard their secret. The tubes of the converter were enclosed in a steel case in such a manner that any attempt to open the case would result in the destruction of the tubes thus releasing the medium, a combination of rare gasses, which must be analyzed if one would learn the secret.

Stanton's elation at their success received a setback when Hess remarked: "Ja, dos is good, but now we are in a position to really do something."

Hess said to Stanton a few days later: "You should take a rest. I must make some drawings before we go on with the work. I shall have some draftsmen to assist. But you take a rest for four or five weeks. I wish it. I shall have much for you to do later on. You must keep fit, yes. So go take a rest; do what you like, but keep away from the work." He overcame Stanton's objections and his insistence that Hess needed rest more than he. "Me," Hess blustered, "I am an old shellback; my work is my rest. But you are young. You go rest. Mind, now. My patience is sometimes short, yes." So Stanton departed for Seattle.

Stanton persuaded Kitty that the present stage of development of their discovery warranted their marrying and going to the plant to live. He pointed out that whether or not they succeeded in the field of aviation, X-tricity would be of sufficient value in other ways to

net them a fortune. They spent a month honeymooning and then returned to the plant where they took up their abode in one of the many cottages. Hess' only comment was: "Ja, dos is good, and now to work."

Stanton was surprised at the activity he found at the plant. It was functioning in all its departments. Dozens of workmen thronged the place. He was at at loss to know what was going on, but Hess took him in hand and soon set him right.

"You are just in time," Hess exclaimed. "Things are progressing, yes. Now I am ready to lay a plan before you. You are ready for much work and excitement, is it not, yes? Then come to the lab."

As he entered the laboratory, Hess took up a long wooden pointer, and stepped to one side of the room where on a blank wall hung a number of large drawings. He turned to Stanton, and in his old schoolmaster manner said: "Attend, please." Then he proceeded to explain the drawings, pointing out each detail as he described it, much as a teacher instructs a class in geography.

Pointing to a drawing some ten feet in length, Hess drew Stanton's attention to what appeared to be a dirigible of the Zeppelin type. It was of the well known cigar shape and, except for a conning tower forward of the mid-section, might have represented one of Count Zeppelin's dirigibles.

"Here," said Hess, "is an exterior plan of the machine we propose to build. It is to be three-hundred feet in length and its greatest diameter forty feet. In appearance it is much like the dirigibles of the day, but in material construction it is quite different.

"Here," turning to another drawing, "is a longitudinal section elevation. The outer shell of the machine is of steel four inches in thickness. You will observe that the shell is divided horizontally by a steel deck thus providing an upper and a lower deck. The upper deck is given over to living quarters, food storage refrigerators and a large garden or hot house. This hothouse will be illuminated at times by a new electric light developed by Bofferman. The glass of this light is made of quartz and, according to Bofferman, the ray which is so beneficial to life and normally received from the sun, is produced by this light. On the lower deck will be found the motors, storage tanks, oxygen machines, liquid air machines, refrigerator plant and a small but complete machine shop, and between the lower deck and the shell of the machine are the storage batteries.

At the extreme forward end of the machine is the control room. Here every function of the machine in all its parts is under the observation and control of the operator. In the stern section is housed the propelling machinery. The propeller is peculiar in that it may be folded and drawn into a tubular housing within the machine when it is not in use, and being mounted on a universal joint, it may be moved to steer the machine when navigating in an atmosphere thus rendering rudders unnecessary.

The conning tower is for the purpose of observation and to house various scientific instruments. I am going over these details rapidly so that you may grasp a general knowledge of the machine. You will have occasion to study it more closely later.

The next drawing shows how the lifting power of X-tricity is applied to the machine. The shell of the machine represents your steel bar. You will observe that it is wound from end to end with many turns of wire. When X-tricity is passed through this coil of wire the machine will rise from the ground with a force equal to its own weight. That is: when the full current is applied, the machine will fall away from the earth. Its weight and speed in that direction will be the same as though it were falling toward the earth with the coils unenergized. Of course the degree of lifting force is under the control of the operator and the machine may be made to weigh nothing, in which state it will be just afloat, or it may be hurled violently away from the earth, just as bodies fall toward it. You will observe the coil of wire around the shell is protected by a thick layer of insulating material, and this is covered with a jacket of light steel which forms the exterior finish of the machine.

You will note, here in the front elevation of the machine, two large, circular windows or ports in its lower front; these may be covered with outside shutters of steel at the will of the operator. The ports of the conning tower and those of the hothouse are equipped in like manner. It is obvious, of course, that the ports in the front of the machine are for the convenience of the operator when navigating. The glass in all ports is very thick and strong to withstand pressure, and the party are fitted air-tight. Outside the heavy glass is a thinner glass of special composition to withstand extreme cold, and between the inner and outer glasses are electric heaters to prevent frosting at low temperatures. When the hatches in the upper surface of the machine are closed, the machine is airtight and capable of withstanding considerable internal pressure.

I think this will give you a general idea of the machine we are going to build; I should say, we are already building. I have not attempted to build it all here. The time is too short, and our plant too small to have the machine completed and thoroughly tested by the time Mars is in its next near opposition. So I am having the larger parts, especially the shell, made in Eastern steel mills. It will be made in circular sections cut into segments and is to be shipped here and assembled at our plant. Such machinery as may be found in the market, I am buying. We are making such parts as are unobtainable elsewhere. The converters will be your and my job. I have adopted this plan because the time is so short; we must be ready by 1907, the year of the next near opposition of Mars, for it will be many years thereafter before Mars will be at as favorable an opposition."

Stanton had promised himself that he would not let Hess' moods worry him, but now he had to admit that he was really worried. Hess had all the earmarks of a fanatic, if not of a maniac. He had dwelt on the limited time because of the approaching near opposition of Mars. What had the opposition of Mars, or any other position of Mars to do with it? Could it be that the man seriously contemplated the navigation of space? Was it not enough to build a machine capable of successfully navigating the earth's atmosphere? If he must try space, why not try to reach the moon? That were nearer. He could not bring himself to believe that Hess was serious in this matter. If he were, then he was visionary, a dreamer, mad.

Hess with a keenness often attributed to the insane, seemed to read Stanton's thoughts. "Ah, my boy," he said, "you think me mad because I would navigate space, because I would try to reach Mars? Perhaps I am, but are not all inventors just a little mad? Is not any one just a little mad who dares to think differently than the herd? Or any one who dares attempt the seemingly impossible? Has it not always been so?

Back in our school days, when you speculated on the possibility of navigating space, I was wont to make light of it and to tease you a little. Perhaps I did it because I was a little ashamed of my own thoughts and dreams, but I say to you now that this has been my most cherished desire all my life. That hangar across

the way once housed a machine as large as ours shall be, but it has long since gone to the junk heap; I called it Hess' Folly. Why should not we reap the first fruits of our secret, the first press, as it were, before we turn it over to an ungrateful world to use for their own destruction perhaps, rather than for their benefit? I I do not wish to rule in this matter, but I believe that down in your heart you are just as mad as I am. But first to build the machine; we have much to do, yes."

During the next three years Stanton was kept too busy with the work in hand to speculate greatly as to the ultimate use to which the machine might be put. He and the tube-maker were kept busy for several months with the converters. Hess found time to superintend their work. The locomotive was kept busy hauling up material and machinery. The traveling crane moved incessantly between rail and hangar and from foundry to shop. The crew of men was doubled; working two shifts. Hess would have run three shifts had he been able to do without sleep; he would allow nothing to be done without his personal supervision.

On the first day of July, 1907, the great machine was finished. Each mechanical unit within the great shell had been tested. Everything was perfect down to the smallest detail, and the time had arrived when the machine must be tested in flight. As the work progressed and as each part of the machine was finished and tested, the workmen had been dismissed each with a tidy bonus to tide him over, until he could find other employment. Gradually the ranks of workmen thinned until at last, when the machine was finished, there were none left at the plant, and, except for the machine in the hangar, the place had much the same appearance as on the day when Stanton first saw it.

Hess had so skillfully handled the work that no workman had gained a complete knowledge of the machine. Hess alone understood it in every detail. Next to Hess, Stanton knew the machine better than any other man, but he frankly admitted that he did not fully understand the principles involved in the converter, and did not know that Hess fully understood them, and Hess was non-committal on that point.

At last the day, or rather the night, of the trial trip arrived. For a week the machine had undergone severe tests in every part. For days at a time it had been raised from the ground as far as the roof of the hangar would permit and sustained there, while each of the three lifting units were being tested. Each lifting unit was capable of sustaining the machine in flight, and should one fail, another could be switched in instantly. Each unit was complete in itself; motor, generator, converter, batteries and winding around the shell.

When the full power of any two units was applied, the machine would be hurled away from the earth, decelerating at the rate of falling bodies. The converters, the most delicate part of the machine, were nine in number, each capable of handling the output on a generating set and could be instantly switched in or out of circuit. While the converters were delicate, the chance of failure was so slight as to be almost negligible.

The machine had been provisioned for a long voyage. At midnight that night, Kitty, standing on an improvised platform, broke a bottle of champagne on the nose of the machine as she said: "I christen thee Molmoth." Kitty, Hess and Stanton then went aboard, the hatches were closed and the Molmoth was ready to start on her maiden voyage.

Kitty and Hess went to the control room. Stanton went to the motor room to see that all went smoothly there. Kitty took her place at the wireless key. Hess, at the controls, applied the lifting power. The great machine rose, the propeller began to turn and the Molmoth glided from the hangar and out over a deep gorge. Gradually the lifting power was increased and the machine rose higher and higher. They went that night farther from the earth than any human being had ever gone; out beyond the atmosphere, out where the gravitational pull of the earth was nearly nil, out where the temperature was lower than any ever experienced on earth. Yet they experienced no discomfort, for the air pressure and temperature within the machine was automatically regulated to their needs.

Returning to the earth's atmosphere, they brought the propeller into use and began a cruise which took them to the unexplored corners of the earth. They cruised in search of the south pole. What they discovered there will, when revealed, revolutionize man's knowledge of this earth, as did Magellan's proof that the earth is a sphere and not a flat plain. But all that is recorded in the log of the maiden voyage of the Molmoth. The purpose of this narrative is to record the history of quite another voyage. Where the Molmoth went on that trial trip is of little importance here, but the fact that she met every test and performed faultlessly is of the greatest importance.

The speed of the Molmoth proved to be five hundred miles per hour when driven by the propeller in the atmosphere. The speed at which the machine might be thrown from the earth under the force of repulsion they did not test at that time because of the danger of leaving at a speed of no return before they were ready to do so. Upon their return to the plant, they remained aloft for a week; up beyond the reach of human eyes they drifted with the automatic altitude control set. The lifting machinery underwent a thorough test at that time. During that week aloft, Hess talked a great deal about his ambition to reach Mars or some other possibly inhabitable planet.

"It is not merely the achievement of reaching another planet that most interests me," he said,, "I should like to give a number of human beings, of the right sort with high ideals about life, a chance to start anew, unhampered by our age-old usages and customs. I would give them a chance to put into practice a better plan of living, such as some of us dream of, but which we are denied the right to try because of some political or religious taboo which says 'vorboten'. People such as you and Kitty, John, and the children you will have some day, and some others, preferably children, whom we may educate and train away from the hidebound conventionalities of this earth.

"The reason my mind centers on Mars, is because conditions there seem to be more like those on earth than are those of any other planet. I believe the environment there is congenial to human life, but I do not believe that Mars is inhabited by intelligent beings. If there is any sort of animal life there, it is of a low order. I have many reasons for my deductions along this line.

"While I am an evolutionist, generally speaking, I cannot conceive of man as having evolved here on earth; he has all the earmarks of an alien plant. In all the degrees of life, each degree or order overlaps the next higher order, except in the case of man. Between man and the next lower order, there is too great a spread to admit of his having evolved here as other things undoubtedly have done. This fact, of course, is what leads theologians to suppose that man is an edition de luxe of the creator's work; something apart.

"I have no doubt that man evolved somewhere in a perfectly natural way, and was transplanted here either by accident or design. The manner of his coming is

a matter of conjecture, of course, but there are several logical answers even to that. All things work out according to law, if not indeed, after a preconceived plan. Man possesses two characteristics which widely separate him from any other creature we know; they are initiative and creative intelligence. The two working hand in hand in man's development are so closely interwoven as to be almost synonymous. It may be that when man, through his initiative and creative intelligence, overcomes nature in a given environment, and through his advancement has exhausted the resources necessary to his further progress, certain individuals of a high order are transplanted into a new environment, or, at least, devise ways and means to transplant themselves. If such be the case, Nature is more jealous of certain individuals, than she is of the species.

"I believe the race is about to take another step ahead, but finds itself at the end of the trail. If it is to make any real progress, it must have new ground to stand on. The old ground is too thickly strewn with ruins of the past to afford an open road to future advancement. There is, of course, much room for material advancement here on earth, but I have in mind what we may term spiritual progress. More and more each day material things fail to satisfy the higher nature of man, and his spiritual progress is retarded in almost exact proportion to his material advancement.

"I believe that a handful of human beings whose spiritual advancement outweighs material things, given a fair chance to build anew, not on the old ruins using the stones cut by bygone builders, but on new ground with material of their own fashioning, could carry spiritual advancement farther ahead, in a few generations, than it has gone in ages here on earth. So you see my interest in reaching another planet is not one of purely personal adventure in a material sense, but reaches out to what I conceive to be man's grandest and noblest aim; spiritual evolution. The end we do not know, if, indeed, man is working toward a definite end; but if he is, I can think of no more worthwhile goal than spiritual perfection. In so far as material advancement is a means to this end, it is good; carried beyond that, it becomes a destroyer of man's better self. Such, at least, is my humble opinion."

The revelation of this phase of Hess' character came as a complete surprise to Stanton. He had thought Hess a cold, calculating scientist, with a cynical attitude toward the problems of humanity. It gave to Hess' ambition to reach Mars an entirely new angle, and caused something to stir down deep in Stanton's being. He began to realize that there was a side to his own nature of which he had been wholly unaware. Kitty, on the other hand, did not seem surprised; her intuition had penetrated beneath Hess' exterior, and she had read him more correctly than had Stanton. Kitty, in fact, sensed, through some subtle harmonic vibration perhaps, that in Hess, she had found a kindred spirit versed in the deeper things of life. To her, Hess' plan to reach Mars presented no strange aspect whatever. An age-old something within her seemed to counsel her that this was her opportunity to fulfil the destiny for which she had existed through the ages.

Kitty and Stanton discussed this phase of the matter more often than any other subject, and as time passed, that undefinable something in Stanton began to take shape, to quicken, to come to life. Day by day he began the more to see the serious and magnificent side of the project; began to feel that he, too, had been chosen of old to fulfil a foreordained destiny. Unconsciously at first, and later by volition, he tried to make each thought and act an integral part of Hess' great plan, until, at last, he reached the point of complete consecration to the cause. He began to read into his past much of co-ordination, where before he had found only coincidence or accident.

When they landed again at the plant, Hess said to them: "We must be ready to take off at the next near opposition of Mars which occurs in August of this year; only thirty days hence. We must be prepared to meet every imaginable contingency, for no man, not even Columbus, ever set out on an adventure with so little of knowledge to guide him. I think it unwise to take anyone with us on this first flight. We three fully appreciate what lies ahead, and, should we fail, will feel that we have given our all in a good cause.

"On our various trips aloft, I have found conditions in space so at variance with popular beliefs as to render any calculations of speed, distance and time, based on available data, little better than guess-work and a waste of time. The sensible thing to do is to prepare to meet every possible emergency and then trust to luck."

As a final preparation they covered the machine with a thick coating of asbestos cement reinforced with wire netting. They installed a powerful wireless set operated by X-tricity instead of electricity and unaffected by ordinary wireless. As an auxiliary to their gravity motors, they installed two gasoline motors which they would use only in an emergency because of the oxygen they consume. Their gravity motors would be useless when beyond the attraction of a planet. Many devices, by means of which they hoped to meet and successfully cope with every imaginable contingency, were provided.

The storerooms of the machine were stocked with provisions, clothing and other supplies were put aboard until every available space was filled. Of such things, they had a sufficiency for two or three years, but their supply of water and air was limited. Of the latter two necessities, water gave them the most concern; water may not be compressed or otherwise reduced to a smaller volume. Air, on the other hand, may be compressed, liquefied, or its life-sustaining constituent. stored as oxygen. They carried it in all three forms. The machine was equipped with air purifiers, making it possible to use the same air over and over again. Seeds of various kinds, plants and cuttings were provided. The hothouse garden contained many growing plants. The garden pool was stocked with fish, and a pen of poultry occupied a corner of the garden.

Time passed swiftly. They were too busy with their preparations to give much thought to their own part in the adventure. The day before the one set for departure found everything in readiness. The machine had been given its final test for lifting power, and no precaution that human ingenuity could devise had been neglected. It was then that their thoughts turned to their own part in this great adventure, and their thoughts left them silent. They sat long that night in meditation. Twenty-four short hours hence they would be hurled away from the bosom of Mother Earth to meet—what?? They were loath to sleep away any of their last hours on earth, and it was late that night when they retired. Stanton took Kitty in his arms and they gazed long and silently into each other's eyes, but saw only courage and steadfast determination there. This was undoubtedly their last night on earth, and possibly their last night of life, but neither spoke of that.

Now that the excitement of preparation was over, fatigued minds and bodies demanded their quota of rest, and it was late the morning of the day of de-

parture when they sat down to breakfast. After breakfast Hess went to the hangar, where he spent the day going over the machine. His inspection took in every detail; nothing escaped his scrutiny. Stanton and Kitty spent the day strolling about the plant and into the hills. There was little conversation between them. Their thoughts occupied them completely. They were trying to absorb as much of earth as possible in the short time which remained.

The three met around the table that night to partake of their last supper on earth. Hess was in fine spirits, but failed to rouse Kitty and Stanton from their meditations. When they had finished their repast, Hess filled their glasses with champagne and proposed a toast to their departure. While they stood with glasses raised, Hess recited in a half-serious, half-jocular manner: "Here's to Mother Earth who has nurtured and cradled the race since time immemorial. Here's to the God-given initiative and intelligence, the curiosity and perseverance of man, which forces him to penetrate the mysteries and secrets of Nature, to turn them to his own account and purposes and thereby raise himself above the brute to a plane more worthy of his kinship to the Creator. Here's to the Molmoth and her crew who are about to brave the mysteries and dangers of space, in obedience to that inner urge which has ever driven man forward in the service of his kind. Here's to success, to happiness, to Life. Drink hearty, mine comrades."

When they had drunk the toast, Hess resumed: "Since we do not take off until near midnight, I counsel you to get some sleep. I shall take my own advice. Hannon will call us." He left them then, and Kitty and Stanton retired. The activities of the day left them pleasantly fatigued and it seemed no time at all until Hannon rapped on their door and roused them to wakefulness.

The night was dark. The sky was like black velvet on which the jewel, Mars' bright orb, outshown the other jewels of the heavens. They gazed for a time at the port of their hopes, but their emotions were as calm, cool and hushed as the night about them. They were to try to keep in touch with Hannon by wireless. Hess' instructions to Hannon were: "No matter what happens, give out nothing for publication."

From the platform by the hatch in the upper surface of the machine, Hess' call of: "All aboard," echoing hollowly in the cavern of the great hangar, brought an end to the Stantons' farewells to the Hannons. They mounted to the platform where they joined Hess and for several minutes looked down at the upturned faces of their friends. Then, with a farewell wave of the hand, they entered the machine; Hess, coming last, closed and fastened the hatch cover. The shutters of all the ports had been closed with the exception of one in the control room and one in the conning tower.

Kitty and Hess took their posts in the control room; Stanton went to the conning tower to make observations, and to report to Hess by telephone. The motors began to throb, sending a tremor through the machine. Their speed steadily increased until a dull roar reached Stanton in the conning tower. The machine trembled slightly as it rose from the floor of the hangar, then the propeller pushed it slowly out over the valley where it came to rest. Hess then shipped the propeller into its tubular housing, for it would not be needed again until they wished to navigate the atmosphere of Mars.

At a signal from Hess, Kitty sent the message: "We're off." At the same instant Hess fed the full power of the three lifting units, one at a time in rapid succession, to the coils around the machine. To the watchers in the control room, the ground seemed to fall away with terrific speed. Never before had the machine left the ground under full power. Hannon wirelessed to them: "You left the ground like a projectile from a coast-defense gun. The wind of it bowled me over and made the trees sway."

There was little to be seen outside the machine, so they turned their attention to the instruments which recorded outside conditions. The barometer hand reached the pin at zero in a few seconds, the thermometer "froze up" at about the same time; the hand of the gravity meter moved toward zero, with a speed twice that of the second hand of a watch. Outside, all was absolute blackness and absolute cold. Hess kept his eyes on the gravity meter, and as the motors slowed down because of the diminishing influence of the earth, he shifted the load from them to the storage batteries. The motors slowly died; the hand of the gravity meter reached zero and Hess shut off the current. There was nothing more to do but to wait. The question in all their minds was: "Has the machine gained sufficient speed—the speed of no return which would carry them far beyond the earth's attraction, or only sufficient to cause it to become a satellite of the earth and to go on forever circling the earth?"

Out in space, the normal condition of bodies is one of motion, whereas, on earth the normal condition of objects is static. Therefore, whatever speed and momentum they might acquire in leaving the earth, would tend to carry them on in the course of their departure until arrested by collision with another body or by the attraction of a planet. Should they not gain sufficient speed to carry them free of the earth's attraction, they might return to earth and land safely.

On their many trips aloft, they had learned that out in space beyond the earth's atmosphere, but where the tug of gravity is only sufficient to cause the hand of the gravity meter to bounce on the pin at zero when the glass over the dial is tapped with the finger, all is absolute darkness; neither the sun nor planets are visible. They attribute this condition to the theory that the sun's rays must pass through a medium of resistance, such as the earth's atmosphere, in order to produce the sensations of light and heat.

They learned, too, that the sun's invisible rays in space act on a fluoroscopic screen and on a photographic plate in the same manner as does the X-ray. Putting this knowledge into effect, they had provided themselves with these devices, and they became their only means for observing conditions outside the machine. By using the camera and fluoroscope at regular intervals, they were able to check their position in space in relation to the heavenly bodies about them. The planets when sighted away from the sun through the fluoroscope, appeared as bright spots on a dark field; when sighted toward the sun, they appeared as dark spots on a light field.

It soon became evident that they were traveling away from the earth and toward Mars in a more or less straight line. They calculated that the machine would not leave the earth in a straight line, but that its trajectory would be influenced to some extent by the earth's rotation, and by its motion around its orbit. A few minutes after Hess had shut off the power, observation taken simultaneously from the control room and conning tower, showed the earth to be directly below the machine and totally eclipsing the sun, while Mars occupied a corner of the fluoroscopic screen, when viewed through a porthole in the top of the conning tower. With this as a basis for their observations, they were able to check their position from time to time.

When Hess had finished his observations, he rose from his seat with the intention of stretching his legs. He had forgotten about the absence of gravity, and exerted as much muscular energy as he would have under earth conditions. The result was that he shot to the ceiling of the room, where he brought up with a bump, and there he lay while he rubbed his bruised head and smiled down at Kitty, and she, startled by his strange antics, uttered a cry and sprang from her seat to join him. Hess was able to check the force of her arrival and she was not injured. Kitty still wore her headphones and they regained their seats by means of the cord which led from the headphones to the instrument board.

Hess was greatly amused by this incident, but said to Kitty: "We had better put on our magnetic soles before we attempt to move about again." When they phoned their experience to Stanton in the conning tower, he had the laugh on them, for he had donned his magnetic soles as soon as they left the earth. These soles were designed to clamp to the soles of the shoes thus enabling them to walk on the steel decks in the absence of gravity.

Hess phoned Stanton to join them, and proposed that, except when making hourly observations, they might as well remain together. The absence of the force of gravity brought them many amusing experiences. Objects left suspended in midair would remain so for some time, finally they would be drawn to the floor or walls of the room by the slight attraction which operates between material objects. It was impossible to pour liquids from a vessel, or to prepare coffee in a percolator. Attempts to boil liquids in an open vessel resulted in the liquid being forced from the vessel by the first flash of steam, then it formed into a sphere and floated above the vessel. Their amusement and interest in these and various similar experiments tended, for a time, to divert their minds from the constant peril which threatened them, caused them to forget that Hannon was frantically calling them.

They were in constant danger of crashing into meteoroids or asteroids, and at the terrific speed at which they were moving, the result could hardly be other than disastrous should they meet with a sizeable body.

While any attempt to calculate their speed and the distance to their objective seemed futile, yet it afforded an agreeable pastime for Hess. He found that most of the theories, advanced by earthly scientists, concerning space, break down completely when one enters space. Consequently, he had very little dependable data on which to base his calculations.

Taking the proposition that, the force of gravity falls off as the square of the distance from the earth, as his major premise, he attempted to answer by calculation the following among other questions: Would the repelling force of the machine and the resistance to its motion fall off at the same ratio, and, if not, what would the difference be? Had the machine left the earth in a straight line, and, if not, what would the ultimate curvature of its trajectory be? Would the machine be carried near enough to Mars to be attracted by that planet? A very nice problem in higher mathematics, some of the factors of which would require days to work out even with complete data at hand. Yes Hess figured and revised his figures, but he invariably arrived at the conclusion that it would be better to wait and do his figuring after he reached Mars.

They soon became accustomed to their strange surroundings, they learned to do things in a different way, and fell into a routine similar to that on shipboard.

They took hourly observations, and as the days passed, their position in relation to the earth remained the same except that the distance between earth and machine steadily increased. As the earth became apparently smaller, it no longer totally eclipsed the sun, and the sun's corona shown around the earth. Observations toward Mars showed that the planet was slowly moving toward the center of the fluoroscopic screen.

Hess had kept a careful check on the electric current used for lighting, heating and such cooking as might be done in the absence of gravity and had noted a decided falling off of the amount used in the past few days. They had used the same number of lights as usual, the amount of current used for cooking remained constant, but there had been a decided saving in current used for heating. This condition puzzled him, for, according to rule, the extreme cold of space should have penetrated even the thick coat of insulation on the outside of the machine. Up to this time they had not practiced the strict economy they expected would be necessary in order to conserve their stored current. Hess began to wonder about the true conditions in space and set about making some experiments.

They had provided an instrument for testing certain conditions outside the machine; it consisted of a glass tube, six inches in diameter, which extended horizontally through the wall of the conning tower. The outer end of the tube was closed air-tight by a shutter which might be operated from within the tower; the inner end of the tube was provided with an air-tight cap. Objects might be placed in the tube and exposed to outside conditions without the loss of air from the machine. Observations were made through the wall of the tube.

Being especially curious as to the temperature outside, Hess placed a small thermometer in the tube and opened the outside shutter. He expected to see the column of mercury shrink rapidly, but, to his amazement, it was unaffected. The mercury stood at sixty-five degrees, when the thermometer was placed in the tube and there it remained. Thinking the thermometer might be out of order, he ran up the mercury by holding the thermometer near an electric light bulb. He repeated the experiment, getting the same result; the mercury remained unmoved.

There was but one conclusion to be drawn; they were in a condition in space where there was no temperature, or, at least, one in which there was no medium through which the state of temperature might be communicated to a thermometer. This, then, accounted for the economy in heating current during the past few days. Hess remembered, then, he had noted that the glass of the ports had frosted slightly even with the heaters in action between the outer and inner glasses the first day out, but this condition had passed and did not occur again. From these observations, he deduced the theory that the condition of extreme cold existed only in the vicinity of planets. If this proved to be true, it would furnish a means of detecting the near approach to a planet.

The days passed in what soon became dull routine. The only sensations of an unusual character were those of lightness and great strength. They became accustomed to the weightlessness of objects. They spent much time in the garden, where the quartz lamps were kept going several hours a day. All the plants in the garden flourished under the violet-ray.

Day by day it became evident that the machine was slowly straightening on its course toward Mars. The disc of Mars on the fluoroscopic screen moved slowly toward the center of the field, while that of the earth remained stationary. Thus things progressed

until the thirtieth day, when observations revealed an entirely new motion of the machine.

Mars began to move slowly toward the port side of the screen, whereas before it had been moving diagonally across the field from one corner toward the center. The shadow of the earth on the opposite screen was moving from the center of the field toward the starboard side. This could mean but one thing: The machine was turning over.

The batteries and the greater part of the machinery was on the lower deck and acted as ballast to keep the machine upright under the force of gravity or repulsion. Now, that the machine was turning over, it was evident that the attraction of some planet was acting on it. They hoped that the attraction was that of Mars. They watched the screens constantly, reporting back and forth by phone.

The motion, slow at first, increased steadily over a period of hours until the shadow of Mars passed off the screen at the port side, and that of the earth at the starboard side of the screen. They then moved the fluoroscopic screens to portholes on the port and starboard sides of the conning tower, where they again had the planets under observation. The motion continued with increasing rapidity until the shadows again passed off the screens. They then returned the screens to their former positions and the shadows of the earth and Mars again appeared, but on opposite screens to those they had formerly occupied. The shadows moved steadily toward the center of the screens, passed it to a considerable distance, returned again toward the center which they passed to a lesser distance and again returned toward the center. This oscillation continued for some hours, growing slower and shorter until the machine came to rest with the shadows of the planets occupying opposite screens to those on which they had appeared before the machine began to turn.

Interest, which had lagged during the past thirty days, now rose to fever heat. Undoubtedly the machine was feeling the gravitational pull of Mars. However, they realized that as yet it was very slight; not great enough to register on the gravity meter. Only a slight force would be required to roll the machine over, balanced as it was in space.

On the fluoroscopic screen the bright disc of Mars grew larger and they realized that the momentum of the machine, aided slightly by gravity, was carrying them swiftly toward Mars. Questions of the gravest importance to their safety raced through their minds: Would the repulsion of the machine be sufficient to overcome their speed and momentum together with the gravitational pull of the planet? When should they begin to apply repulsion, as soon as the gravity meter began to register, or should they wait until the pull was quite strong?

There was danger in applying repulsion too soon, as it might cause the machine to sheer past the planet and miss it altogether. Or the machine might pass Mars at a distance and be turned back by the planet's attraction to follow an elliptical path; an orbit of its own, and due to centrifugal force balanced by gravity, become a satellite of Mars. This latter danger was as serious as the danger of a crash. To be trapped in space only to perish miserably when their supply of water and air gave out, and then to go on forever circling the planet in their steel sepulchre, presented a prospect which made a crash seem preferable by comparison.

There was no thought of sleep and but little of eating. Even Hess might have missed some of his meals, had not Kitty brought food to him. They tried to calculate their speed by the rate of increase of the planet's disc on the screen, but here, too, unknown factors rendered calculation mere speculation, and they decided that to keep their heads and trust to luck was the only course open to them. They started the gas motors to charge the batteries with X-tricity, and though the motors consumed precious oxygen, they felt that they had a better chance to survive a short supply of air than a shortage of repelling force when it come time to land.

The gravity meter began to show signs of life; that is, when the glass over the dial was tapped sharply, the indicator hand would bounce on the pin at zero. It was at this time that they had their first view of Deimos; Mars' outer moon. It appeared on the screen, a small spot scarcely the size of a dime, beside the larger planet. A little later Phobos, the inner moon, appeared.

The gravity meter began to register. It moved very slowly to the first graduation, one one-hundredth of its scale. The disc of the planet steadily increased until it crowded the moons off the screen. It was high time to take some action; the next hour held for them success or failure, life or death.

While Stanton stood guard over the motors, Hess and Kitty occupied the control room; Kitty at the wireless key and Hess, with his eyes fixed on the gravity meter, presided over the controls. Steadily the hand of the gravity meter crept upward. When it had reached the tenth point of the scale, Hess, realizing that the attraction of Mars is approximately only forty per cent. that of the earth, began to gradually apply repulsion as a test to ascertain whether the power were sufficient to check their progress. After an application of full power for several minutes, the hand of the gravity meter slowed appreciably. Hess then considered that the machine was under full control and he threw off the power until the meter registered twenty points, when he repeated the test with favorable results. He did not entirely cut off the power after this test, but regulated it to slow the hand of the meter which had increased in speed during the last ten points of its rise.

At this stage of their approach, Stanton, who had gone to the tower to make observations, saw on the screen the shadow of Deimos. It was above the machine and very near. At this time, the shadow of Mars on the control room screen overran the field and the perimeter was lost to view. When the hand of the gravity meter had advanced a few more points, the barometer began to register denoting the presence of an outer atmosphere, and outer space became diffused with a faint opalescent light. The light increased and for the first time they were able to see Mars without the aid of the fluoroscopic screen. It looked more like a huge snowball than anything else to which they could liken it. Other planets and the sun became visible and navigation became less of a problem.

Kitty had kept up a continual effort to communicate with Hannon, but with only varying success and unsatisfactory results. They laid the trouble to the possibility that the plant was on the side of the earth opposite to them at the time. When the gravity motors began to function, Hess gradually shifted the load to them until they carried it all, thus relieving the gas motors and conserving their supply of oxygen. It behooved them to conserve their air supply until they learned whether or not the atmosphere of Mars was capable of sustaining human life.

As they neared the planet, it became evident that the surface was passing beneath them at a rapid rate, causing objects to blur. The planet rotates on its axis

with a surface velocity of approximately five hundred miles per hour at the equator. It was necessary to bring the machine into step with the planet's rotation. Hess lowered the machine to within a few thousand feet of the surface where he brought it to equilibrium. He then unhoused the propeller which was capable of driving the machine at a speed of five hundred miles per hour in an atmosphere, headed the machine in the direction of the planet's rotation and drove it at about one-half of its maximum speed. In about two hours they had caught up with the planet's rotation and the ground appeared to be stationary beneath them. There was nothing to do, now, but to seek a suitable landing place and ground the machine, but night was well advanced so they decided to postpone landing until morning. With the automatic levitator set to hold the machine at an altitude of two thousand feet, they all retired to get some much-needed rest. Thus they spent the first night hovering over a new world.

They were up before sunrise next morning. They stood in the conning tower eagerly waiting for the sun to reveal their new world to them. The twin stars, earth and moon, shone brightly and they found it difficult to realize that they had ever left the earth or that the terrain below them was that of Mars.

The sun rose in a clear sky. Its rays were reflected back to them from what appeared to be a limitless field of ice, yet they knew it could not be ice, the atmosphere was too warm for that. They gazed long, puzzled at what they beheld. The ice-like substance was cracked and split by crevasses and fissures of varying widths from mere cracks to great gorges, hundreds of feet in width and hundreds of feet deep. The larger crevasses extended in a north and south direction, while the others ran in every direction. There appeared to be no unbroken area large enough for a landing place.

Lowering the machine into one of the great crevasses, they were able to study this peculiar substance at close range. The nearer view revealed that it was much like obsidian, a glasslike volcanic formation, sometimes called volcanic glass. The deeper strata seemed quite solid, but the upper several feet was filled with air bells and bubbles. Down in the deep blue shadows of the crevasse there appeared to be water, very clear and still.

There was no landing place within range of their vision, so they turned the machine westward and cruised at a moderate speed. In about an hour, they came to a crevasse some five or six miles in width and several hundred feet deep. Its bottom was traversed by water channels which cut it up into islands of various sizes and of approximately rectangular outline. These islands were, for the most part, full of pinnacles and buttes, although there were a few with comparatively smooth surfaces. Between the foot of the crevasse walls and the nearest water, appeared vegetation of some sort. Evidently soil had collected there, being carried by winds or flood water. They turned their machine northward and followed the great crevasse for several hundred miles without finding a suitable landing place. Despairing of finding a landing place in the crevasse, they rose above the wall and continued their westward cruise.

For several hundred miles the surface remained the same as that flown over previously. Then they saw what at first appeared to be a crevasse of immense width, but this proved to be a different formation than any they had yet seen. Exploration proved it to be a lowlying prairie some sixteen hundred miles in breadth and roughly circular in outline.

The surface of this prairie, where they first approached it, was swampy and maintained a marinelike growth some twenty feet in height. They attempted to land in this swampy country, but concluded that it was unsafe. They did, however, bring the machine very near the surface that they might examine the vegetation at close range. Kelp-like stalks rose almost as high as the machine, the leaves were triangular, thick and fleshy, and each stalk bore a huge yellow flower. . . . They raised the machine and proceeded westward. In a short time, the surface beneath them changed; it was higher, dry and supported vegetation in the form of rank grass and a shrub similar to the rhododendron. This shrub was the nearest thing to a tree they had yet seen. They found an open space free of brush, and brought the machine to ground; this was their first actual contact with Mars.

Up to this time they had made their observations from the closed machine, since they did not know whether the atmosphere of Mars was fit to breathe. Their next move was to test the air. Using the instrument for testing outside conditions, the before-mentioned glass tube extending through the tower wall, they placed a lighted candle in it and admitted the outside atmosphere. The candle burned more brightly than when in the atmosphere within the machine, probably because the air within was slightly devitalized. The atmosphere of Mars contained sufficient oxygen to support combustion.

They next tested the atmosphere for any gas which might be detrimental to animal life. They accomplished this in the same manner that air is tested in mines on earth; they placed a canary in the tube and opened the outside shutter sufficiently to admit air, but not wide enough to allow the bird to escape. The little fellow ruffled his feathers, preened himself and began to sing. When the canary had been in the tube an hour and still gave no evidence of distress, they considered the air safe to breathe.

Before they might open the hatch it would be necessary to equalize the air pressure inside and outside the machine. This was a matter of requiring but a few minutes to accomplish, since the barometer recorded an outside atmospheric pressure of twenty-seven and nine-tenths inches, disproving the theory of a very rare Martian atmosphere. The lowering of the pressure within the machine to that outside was accomplished without ill effect to themselves. They then mounted the stairs to the platform beneath the main hatch.

With eager hands, Hess and Stanton undid the fastenings of the hatch and threw it open. Then stepping back with a courtly bow to Kitty they said: "Ladies first." Kitty, all a-tremble with excitement, mounted the ladder to the platform by the tower, where Hess and Stanton joined her.

The sun shown brightly, the air was warm and balmy, their machine seemed to float in a sea of vegetation. A great silence brooded over the scene. Awed by the beauty of it all, and realizing that theirs were probably the first human eyes, perhaps the first eyes of any kind, to behold it, they stood long in silence; spellbound.

Hess finally wrenched himself away from the enchantment and went below to fetch a "Jacob's ladder" which he fastened to the platform and lowered over the side. Then, stepping to Kitty's side, he said: "You and your husband shall be the first to set foot on this virgin soil; you shall be the Adam and Eve of Mars."

Kitty looked over the side at the sea of waist-high grass which, in all likelihood, no human foot had ever stirred, and shrank back. Stanton placed his arm around her and said: "Adam came first, you know." He kissed her and began to descend the ladder. When

he reached the ground, he held up his arms to her and she descended and stood by his side. They walked some fifty feet away from the machine making a path of downtrodden grass. They paused there and turned to look up at Hess who stood on the platform, smiling down at them.

There came a rustling in the grass near at hand and a large lizard thrust its head through the wall of grass along the path between them and the machine. The head was soon followed by five feet of body and tail. Kitty screamed and clung to Stanton. The smile faded from Hess' face and he quickly descended to the ground. The lizard had stood indolently regarding Kitty and Stanton with lackluster eyes, but turned at the sound of Hess' approach to stare at him. Then Hess laughed. "It is quite harmless," he said, "most lizards are. This one greatly resembles the iguana of tropical America. The flesh is edible and is considered quite a delicacy in its native land. We may yet welcome them to vary our meat diet." While talking, Hess scratched the lizard's side with the toe of his shoe. This seemed quite to the creature's liking. It rolled to its side and finally to its back with its white belly turned up and uttered grunts of satisfaction. "Yes, quite harmless," Hess repeated, "but let us go and examine those scarlet flowers I see on yonder shrub."

Hess led the way trampling down the lush grass, the lizard at his heels. The flowers were bright scarlet, and very much like the rhododendron. While they stood admiring them, a winged creature about the size of a humming-bird came seeking nectar. The bird-like head was armed with a long, needle-like bill; the body was covered with articulated plates and the wings were membraneous. They named it the beebird. "I wonder if they sting," Kitty exclaimed, drawing back as one approached too near for comfort. "I doubt it," Hess replied. "A creature, armed with a lance like that, would have but little use for a sting."

As they walked back to the machine Hess said: "We have one more test to make before we decide to make Mars our home; the water. We must find out what the water is like."

They headed toward the margin of the prairie, where a canal of water bordered it at the foot of the wall of obsidian, which bounded the prairie on all sides. They found the water to be pure and sweet, but saw no fish in it. While they were working with the water test, Hess said, "I have a plan of exploration to propose to you; it is this: We will cruise north to a point near the equator, then westward heading a few seconds south of west and circumnavigate the planet. We will continue to cruise on this spiral course until we reach the south pole. In that way we shall be able to observe practically every square mile of the southern hemisphere. Then we will return to the equator and cover the northern hemisphere in like manner. By this method, we shall be able to gain a general knowledge of the planet's surface in a few day's time."

Kitty and Stanton agreed to the plan and they set out at once. Eight hundred miles west of the first prairie they came upon another much larger than the first and irregular in outline. The vegetation here was as abundant as that of the first prairie and presented some new species. A veritable forest of bamboo-like plants particularly interested them. They landed the machine in the heart of this jungle crashing their way down through the forty-foot-high canes.

When they were landed, Hess descended to the ground and hacked a trail through the jungle with a machete. As he piled the giant canes at the side of the trail, he paused from time to time to examine the structure of the plants. The atmosphere down on the jungle floor was hot and damp. A mist of steam rose from the ground exposed to the sun.

Kitty, who stood with Stanton on the platform of the machine, suddenly cried out in alarm: "O, Martin, watch out! Come back, hurry!"

Hess turned to see a great snake-like head surmounting a long sinuous neck thrust through the wall of canes between him and the machine. Clutching the machete firmly, he started to retrace his steps, but before he had advanced two paces, Stanton caught up a rifle which, being warned by their experience with the lizards, he had brought to the platform, and fired just as the creatures moved forward into the trail. The bullet struck one in the head. With a convulsive lunge a huge body slumped to the ground, blocking the trail. The creature writhing in its death throes lashed the jungle with its long muscular tail.

When at last the creature lay still. Hess approached and examined it, evidently, with great interest. Looking up from his examination and resting one foot and the point of the machete on the carcass, Hess explained: "This is a mylodon, similar to those which trod the earth in prehistoric times, but much smaller. Prehistoric man domesticated these beasts for their milk. We believe the mylodon to be an ancestor of the cow. I believe they are very docile and under ordinary circumstances, quite gentle. We may turn to them for both milk and meat."

Attracted by the commotion, a large number of these beasts began to move toward the machine. Hess, to escape being borne down by the press of the creatures crowding together, retreated to the ladder, which he mounted half way up, and watched the scene below. On they came trampling the cane flat under their great feet. Slowly they approached and regarded the machine with nearsighted eyes. They drew close to the machine. Hess reached out with the machete and caressed the neck of one of the creatures with the flat of the blade. The great brute swayed forward until its snake-like head rested against Hess' shoulder. He stroked its head and ears with his hand. The mylodon closed its eyes, the lower lip became pendulous and it drooled in sheer pleasure. Presently, due to the pressure exerted by new arrivals, the animals near the machine began to be in distress. Hess mounted to the platform and they raised the machine and proceeded on their way westward.

By traveling westward at about three hundred miles per hour, they increased the hours of daylight. At night they landed when it was convenient to do so. When no landing place was available, they set the automatic levitator and remained aloft. Once they brought the machine down on the glass-like surface to test it as a landing place. The machine sank in the fragile mass amid a tinkling as of breaking glass. The machine seemed to be floating in a sea which reflected every color of the rainbow. The surface was too insecure for a landing place. There was no ice or snow at the south pole at that season of the year. They turned the machine northward to explore the northern hemisphere.

Their chronometers were still adjusted to earth time, they had not remained long enough in one place to establish a meridian and adjust them to the forty-minute longer day of Mars. So their time and position was largely a matter of conjecture, but, after all, these things mattered very little. The surface of the northern hemisphere differed widely from that of the southern hemisphere. The altitude was higher and the surface was mostly desert, not unlike the great deserts of Earth. They found rock of various kinds. Great

areas of drifting sand covered a large portion. Scant vegetation would appear in the north polar region even during the summer season. No trees were found, and there was no evidence that any had ever grown there. There was no coal, but the common metals were abundant and easily procurable. Of silver and gold they found no trace at that time.

When they reached the north pole, they felt certain there was not a square mile of the planet's surface that had not come under their observation. They had found no evidence that the planet had ever been inhabited by creatures of a higher order than those found on the prairies. Their explorations concluded, they turned their attention to the establishment of a permanent home. A site was chosen on the shore of a wide canal, almost a lake in area and form, which bordered the large prairie. They named the place Marcadia. Summer was advancing and they were anxious to get established before the long Martian winter set in.

Building material of high quality was supplied by a vast, level lava bed in the northern hemisphere. Slabs, blocks and other building forms were cut from the thinner portions of the bed by means of an electrically driven saw. Cement of good quality was produced by calcining rock found in another locality. With these and other materials, transported to Marcadia aboard the *Molmoth*, Hess and Stanton constructed a small building to meet their most pressing need; housing for their livestock which were becoming too numerous to be kept longer aboard the machine. The walls of this building were constructed of lava rock, the roof was framed with bamboo poles and thatched with the broad leaves of that plant. The machine was to remain their residence until they found time to erect a permanent structure.

The approach of winter found them comfortably established in their new world. The planning and building of machines and devices to expedite the future work furnished ample employment for the indoor hours of winter. The winter in that latitude proved to be mild with considerable rain. The weather was not sufficiently inclement to prevent outdoor work.

A plan of forestation was carried out during the winter in addition to other work. On the small prairie, cuttings and seeds brought from Earth were planted to raise more seed which would eventually be sown over a vast portion of the prairie. Segregation of the different species was accomplished by planting the various kinds of seed plants in widely separated areas. Near Marcadia on the large prairie smaller groves were started. And at Marcadia fruit trees and vines were planted. Several acres of ground were cleared of brush in the preparation of land for agricultural purposes. Altogether, that first winter was happily and usefully spent.

While time meant very little to them those first few years, they realized that some sort of a system of chronology was necessary for the purpose of keeping records. Their chronometers were easily adjusted to the longer Martian day, but earth's calendar could not be made to serve for the long Martian year. To meet their immediate needs in this respect they improvised one. The days of the Martian year were divided into twenty parcels of thirty-four and thirty-five days. These were called months for want of a better name although the phases of the moons did not enter into the calculation. To every third month an extra day was alloted ,thus the 3rd, 6th, 9th, 12th, 15th and 18th months comprised thirty-five days, the others thirty-four. While this calendar left much to be desired from an astronomical point of view, it could, with occasional corrections, be made to serve until a better one might be worked out. No account was taken of weeks nor were the days and months named, both being referred to by numbers. Thus on the twelfth day of the tenth month of the year one (written 12/10/1.) Martian time, Kitty gave birth to a son. They named him Martian.

Fortune smiled on them and crowned their every effort with success. Spring found them with the season's work well planned. The planting of a crop was, of course, the first on the calendar. They fenced the land cleared during the winter. Bamboo stakes were driven into the ground around the margin of the plot, the intervening spaces were closed with slender poles woven in between the stakes.

The turning of the first furrow in the virgin soil of Mars was attended by considerable ceremony. First came music and speeches. Then Kitty gaily dressed for the occasion drove the brightly bedecked tractor along a flag-marked course and turned the first furrow. Hess and Stanton armed with spade and hoe respectively, marched on either side of the machine.

There was none of that slavish toil which has come to be associated with pioneering on earth. They were equipped with every labor-saving device; human energy was never expended, when mechanical energy could be made to do the work. The spade and hoe were emblems rather than implements. And then, to all intents and purposes, they were sixty per cent. stronger on Mars then when on Earth.

Their first crop was highly diversified; their cultivated area was more in the nature of an experiment station than of a practical farm. The knowledge of how the seeds brought from earth would propogate in the new environment was of more importance than was a large crop of any particular kind. Practically everything evidenced an adaptability to the new soil, and it soon became certain that a bumper crop would be the reward of their labors.

It now became necessary to provide granaries and storage for their vegetables. These were built entirely of lava-rock. The roofs of thin slabs of lava were supported by arches and columns of the same material. After the crop was harvested, it was evident that sufficient time remained to raise a second crop, but since the one just garnered would supply all their needs for more than a year, they decided to let the ground lie fallow until another spring, and turn their attention to more pressing needs.

The supply of iron and steel brought from earth was running low, and it became necessary to take steps to utilize the minerals of the planet. An electric furnace in which to smelt ores, and crucibles for refining steel were set up. This work kept them busy until well into the second winter. With these new materials at hand, they set about making spinning machines and a loom. The product of their first experiment with textiles was crude enough, but patience and practice would remedy all that.

They did not work continuously, but made many excursions to study climatic conditions and the flora and fauna of the planet. They hoped to be able to give more time to the study of these things and of astronomy in the future. The night-sky was a gorgeous spectacle, especially in summer. Jupiter and its moons, the two satelites of Mars and, just before sunrise and just after sunset, the twin stars earth and its moon were objects of wonder and delight to the pioneers.

Kitty was occupied chiefly with the housework and the new boy. He, of course, was monarch of all he surveyed. They were unable to communicate successfully with earth during the winter months because of the greater distance between the planets. The anxiety

felt by the Hannons had lessened somewhat since the successful landing on Mars. A young mylodon captured the first year was easily domesticated and supplied them with milk of good quality. The flesh of the lizzard was no longer a novelty at their table. Plans of a house to become their permanent residence at Marcadia were begun that second winter. Spring planting-time found them with the house plans incomplete, but in such shape that they might begin construction work that year.

The spring work out of the way, they began the constuction of their house. They prepared the site and started the foundation and, though the harvest interrupted the work, the building was well started before the fall rains put an end to the work for that year. A detailed record of that winter's work would cover many pages. They devised many machines and implements to aid them in the future operations, and they tried their skill at making furniture of bamboo. So the winter season sped and another spring found them eager for outdoor employment.

They increased their acreage that year to accommodate a larger crop of cotton and flax. The plans of the new house were now complete and they resumed construction work as soon as the crop was in. The ground floor plan called for a large living room, dining room, kitchen, nursery and dormatory, schoolroom, private apartments, office, power plant and shops—quite an undertaking for two men, but they had every assistance in the way of machinery their ingenuity could devise.

The ceilings and doorways of the house were to be much higher than those on earth and bedrooms larger, for no six-foot bed would accommodate a Martian of the first generation at least. Hess said when planning the house: "We must build on a larger scale here than is customary on earth, for the first generation of Martians will be giants. They will be bred from earth stock who are provided with energy to grow up against a force of gravity sixty per cent. greater than here. Nature will not at once cut off this growing energy, but she is conservative of energy and does not long supply more than is required. After a time, this quality will be furnished in quantities sufficient only to meet growing conditions here. Nor is that all. I believe that future Martians will find physical labor fully as fatiguing here as on earth for the same reason. This surplus energy which we now possess and which enables us to perform so much with ease, is merely a hangover from earth conditions and will leave even us in time. Your children will outgrow you, but we are growing, too, since coming here. I am growing taller, even at my age; I have gained nearly four inches in height. You and Kitty have probably gained more than I have."

By working every hour of daylight, they were able to finish their building in one year; Martian time. With the completion of the building they were permanently settled in their new world. The time was now at hand when the next great step must be taken in the pursuit of their purpose to establish the race in a new environment, where they might progress spiritually unhampered by the precedents of earth. In reference to this matter Hess said: "It is quite evident that we must bring other people here, if we are to carry out our plan for transplanting the race in this new environment. To my way of thinking, the better method is to bring children here. These must be carefully chosen so that we may have the best parent stock possible. The great advantages in bringing children here are these: by choosing very young children we shall be able to begin their education before earth's conditions have made much of an impression on them. They will grow into their new environment and their years of usefulness to the community will be greater, because their years of usefulness will be more numerous than those of adults. Mid-summer will find the planets in position for a take-off. In the meantime, we must recondition the machine and transfer a portion of its equipment to the house. I wish to make as much room as possible aboard in order to increase the storage capacity for air and water and provide more cargo space. We will convert the garden aboard the machine into a nursery for the children. Much of the storage space where we carried food, seeds and the like may now be used for other purposes. Most of the machine-shop equipment may be left here with the spare parts and repair material. Being alone on the return trip I shall be unable to do much in the way of repairs. We must have everything in the pink of condition."

During the busy months of preparation they discussed their future plans as they worked. Kitty managed to spend a great deal of her time with the men. She was greatly interested in Hess' plans. And she felt, too, that she must spend as much time as possible in his company while he was still with them. The Stantons had learned to love the genial scientist very much. They dared not think what their future on Mars might be without him. Hess seemed unmoved by the prospect of the voyage to earth, but they knew him well enough to understand that he fully realized what the success or failure of the undertaking meant to them. When Kitty, in spite of her determination to meet the situation bravely, spoke of the danger and of her fears for his safety, he brushed them aside with: "No more dangerous or uncertain than a voyage across the Atlantic in Columbus' time. Someone must pioneer; someone must dare that the race may progress."

Four Martian years had elapsed since they landed on Mars. During the last year, the great conflict known as the World War had begun on earth. They had built a more powerful wireless set than that on the *Molmoth*, but even with this there were times when communication was unsatisfactory or even impossible. The best time to communicate was when the plant on earth and Marcadia were directly opposite; night on earth and day on Mars as a rule. But the difference of forty minutes in the time of rotation of the two planets tended to continually shift the relative position of the two stations so that the mass of one or the other of the planets was between them, and at times the masses of both planets intervened at the same time.

Hannon had made it a practice to send them the news as it appeared in the daily papers. When communication was impossible, the news accumulated and he sent them on at the first opportunity. So the people on Mars were acquainted with the history of the Great War as well as with the advancement in aviation, radio and things scientific generally.

One night as they sat before the electric fireplace in the living room of the new house discussing the voyage to earth, Stanton remarked: "If the history of our advent on Mars is ever published on earth, there will probably be many Earthlings disappointed, because we were able to establish ourselves here without a bloody conflict; because we found no Martians whom we were obliged to murder that we might gain a foothold."

Hess replied: "No doubt, no doubt. The histories of earth's pioneering are rife with bloodshed, and no history seems quite complete without it. But had we found the planet inhabited by beings like ourselves, they must have been advanced indeed to have offered

anything like real resistance to us having, as we did, the great advantage of possessing the *Molmoth*. Why, with a few Molmoths together with the high explosives and deadly gasses such as they are using in the war on earth, even the inhabitants of earth with all their boasted advancement might be brought quickly into subjection. Attacking from an altitude far beyond the reach of anything they possess, we might make warfare so hideous that all contestants would be forced to lay down their arms in mutual self-preservation. Or did we ally ourselves with any country on earth, all the other countries combined could not prevail against her.

But, be that as it may, I consider such conflict beneath the best in humankind. I consider our conflict with Nature, where the intelligence and perseverance of man is pitted against the forces of Nature to bring them into subjection to his will, is far grander and more enobling than any bloody conquest. When the people of the earth learn this, when they break away from the retarding influence of age-old customs and superstitions, when they learn that it is indeed more blessed to give than to receive; to serve than to be served, then shall their advancement dwarf by comparison all the progress of the past.

We have within our grasp a mighty force to use for the good or ill of mankind and I am happy to know that we all feel it our duty to serve the best interests of our fellow man. I feel, however, that this new force would not bring to earth an unalloyed blessing at this time. There are still too many humans who would see in it only an opportunity to advance their selfish interests at the expense of their fellows. So I think our plan of service will prove best in the long run."

It sorely grieved the Stantons to hear Hess talk of leaving them, but, of course, they had known all the time that someone must return to earth to bring the children if they were to carry out their plan. None was better fitted to carry out this part of the work than was Hess, but the thought of his making that trip alone almost congealed their blood. True, they had made the trip from earth to Mars, but that was no guarantee that the return trip might be successful. They realized that he must go alone, for should they accompany him, the number of children they planned to bring to Mars must be cut down by three to compensate for the water and air the Stantons would consume. They felt like returning to earth and giving up their plan to populate Mars, but of this they said nothing to Hess.

All too soon the great day of departure arrived. Hess would take off in daylight since Marcadia would be turned toward the earth then. The pain of parting was keen. They made their farewells brief. And now I, John Stanton, who have kept this record must bring it to an end since we are sending this copy to earth.

(Signed) John Stanton.

I shall set down here incidents of this voyage which are by their nature a proper part of this record. A more detailed record I shall enter in the logbook.

Martin Hess.

Left Mars five hours ago. Am in the blackness of space. Have been in almost constant communication with Kitty and John. John says Kitty bearing up well. She is a brave woman and John is a brave man. Theirs is a situation which calls for all that is great and noble in mankind. I plan to have six hours sleep in each twenty-four and choose the time when it is night at Marcadia since we can not communicate successfully then.

Twenty-four hours out from Mars: Observations reveal that the machine is headed toward earth and that the trajectory is a little less curved then when leaving earth on the first voyage. However, it is too early to draw definite conclusions. John sends that Kitty spent a restful night and seems her own cheerful self again this morning. John expressed relief on learning that the machine was apparently headed on a proper course.

Second day out: Nothing of importance to record this morning. Machine perceptibly straightening on its course. All is well at Marcadia and aboard the machine.

Third day out: Passed sizable body last night. The attraction was sufficient to stir the gravity meter, but not strong enough to alter the course of the machine. John sends that Molly, the mylodon, gave birth to four calves.

Fifth day out: Nothing of importance transpired during the past forty-eight hours. Tried to get into communication with Hannon: failed.

Seventh day out: Picked up Hannon and noted time when it is night at the plant; the best time to send as plant is turned this way. The machine is nearly straight on its course. Everything going smoothly aboard. I take my constitutional in the dismantled garden; my soft iron shoe-soles going "stick—clap," and waking the echoes in the tunnel-like space. All is well at Marcadia.

Eighth day out: Passed large body near at hand. It caused the gravity meter to rise ten points. Used repulsion to prevent collision and the possibility of the machine thrown off its course. It remained alongside for several minutes, but the machine outran it. Got a good photograph; appears to be a fragment of a wrecked planet. Kitty is not so well; she expects another baby soon.

Tenth day out: The machine collided with a number of small meteoroids. Photographs of the outer surface reveal rents in the lagging, but none penetrate deeply enough to injure the coils. The gravity meter is jumpy; must be in vicinity of sizable bodies. All is well at Marcadia. The Hannons are greatly excited.

Twelfth day out: John sends that Kitty gave birth to a girl baby; they named her Marsha. Mother and babe doing fine. The Hannons picked up the message and sent congratulations. Must make this voyage a success; can't have those youngsters grow to maturity and find no mates. Data compiled by measuring the shadows of the planets on the screens and comparing the time and diameters taken when leaving earth with those recorded on this trip, indicate that the machine is traveling at approximately the same speed as on the former trip.

Fourteenth day out: Nothing unusual occurred the last two days. Kitty and babe doing fine. Try to pass the time in reading. Lonesome.

Sixteenth day out: Hannon sends following—Wireless operators note strange disturbances in ether. Think they are messages from Mars, but can't decipher. Papers full of it. Ha, ha.—Everything going fine.

Eighteenth day out: Earth's shadow occupies most of screen. Can't see moon. Communication with Mars unsatisfactory last twenty-four hours. Hannon receives well from Mars and relays to me. All well at Marcadia. Am getting fidgety; not enough action. Ho hum.

Twentieth day out Space seems clear now. Picked up cluster of meteroids on screen yesterday,: but none near. Hannon has been sending a lot of earth news describing new inventions and progress in aviation. Trying to keep me company; good old scout. Picked up messages from Mars. They are growing anxious. Strange how soon new experiences grow old. Am get-

ting no more kick from this trip than from an ocean voyage.

Twenty first day: Experimented with adjustable spark-gap located outside in front of port hole. Find that the same current which will cross a ten-inch gap at sea level on Earth will cross but three quarters of an inch in space. The spark is invisible, but will photograph like X-ray. Protected my face with lead glass, but suffered slight burns on hands; must be more careful.

Twenty-third day: Been having trouble with air purifier. Burned out bearing. All right now. Must put in duplicate set for return trip.

Twenty-fifth day: Kitty and John anxious; one or the other at wireless key constantly from dawn until dark. All well there, little Marsha doing fine. Hannon's eldest son, Jim, takes a trick at the key, now. Can't realize that he has grown up.

Machine beginning to turn over. Seems too soon for so much earth attraction. May have earth and moon in line. If that is the case, may have trouble passing the moon without throwing machine off its course. Can't see moon on the screen, it is either between me and earth, or on the opposite side of the earth; have no data. Must look alive from now on.

Twenty-sixth day out: Machine has turned over and settled on course. Can't locate the moon with the camera. Gravity meter active. Attraction too strong as compared with same position on outward trip from the earth; something wrong. Gravity meter rising; must be very near the moon. If I use sufficient repulsion to ward off the moon, may throw the machine so far off its course that it will miss the earth.

Note: The turning over of the machine causes no discomfort what ever and may be detected only by observing objects outside the machine. In space there is no up nor down. Aboard the machine one may walk as comfortably on the walls or ceiling as on the floor. One chooses the floor because objects with which he has to deal are located with reference to the greatest accessibility from the latter position.

Twenty-seventh day out: Landed on the moon. It seems better to do so than to risk missing the earth. Picked up moon's atmosphere about twenty miles from surface. There is sufficient resistance to sun's rays to afford light for landing. Did not land on the dark side of moon, but just in view of the sun. Atmospheric pressure offers sufficient resistance to the propeller to drive machine. Will explore some before I leave. Sent message to Hannon to tell his children I have not met the man in the moon yet.

Twenty-eighth day, twentieth hour: Have circumnavigated the moon. The surface is very rough and volcanic in nature. The mountains are very high and steep. Saw no signs of vegetation. The surface is covered to a considerable depth with fine, volcanic ash. Some of it is white as snow. It lies level there being no wind here to drift it. The propeller stirs up great clouds of ashes, which settles quickly. The atmosphere seems to be mostly rare, inert gases, too low in oxygen to support combustion. Am taking samples to analyze later. Made spark test using two-inch gap; spark deep purple, very dangerous. The sun's rays burn the skin quickly: probably the reflected rays are the more dangerous. Temperature is too low to register on my thermometer even on the sunny side of the moon. Atmosphere is too rare to slow sun's rays to heat-length. Twilight prevails even with sun at zenith. Sun is about as brilliant as the full moon seen from earth. From the present position of the machine, the earth appears as a great red crescent.

As to the side of the moon which is perpetually turned away from the earth, I can say very little since I was in the shadow of the moon when I passed above that surface and could see nothing distinctly. I was obliged to cruise at a high altitude to avoid collision with the high mountain tops.

Since I have plenty of air and to spare, I have been running the gas motors as auxiliaries to the gravity motors to store up X-tricity. Gravity is too low here to bring gravity motors up to generating speed. Shall need extra repulsion to make up for that consumed in making moon landing. I shall now take some rest after which I shall take off for earth which I should reach in a few hours.

Twenty-ninth, tenth hour: Have been within the earth's attraction and atmosphere for two hours. Have stabilized the machine and have it under full control. Altitude about forty miles. Will lower machine gradually and propel it eastward until it overtakes the earth's surface speed. Even at this altitude the atmosphere is rushing by at hurricane speed. This pressure together with the thrust of the propeller and the attraction of the earth will bring the machine into step with the earth's rotation in a short time.

Fourteenth hour: Altitude thirty-eight thousand feet. Have nearly overtaken earth's motion and can distinguish objects on its surface. Will lay a course for the plant as soon as I pick up some familiar object or city as point of departure. Hannon says he will blow up if I don't arrive soon.

Twenty-ninth day, 8:18 P. M. Earth time: Landed at plant. Hannon hasn't blown up, but I fear he shall if he won't slow down. Kitty and John send congratulations. And now for something to eat and some sleep.

* * *

Have just returned from an extended trip around the country. Have been winding up my earthly affairs and getting things started for the return trip. The selection of the children is, of course, the important thing. Have engaged the services of some of the best psychiatrists and physiologists to select the children from orphan asylums and foundling homes. Am fortunate in securing the assistance of Miss Vera Straum a young woman of my asquaintance, who has had extensive experience in juvenile work. She is very broad minded and a deep student of human problems. She was quick to grasp our plan of colonization at Marcadia. However, I did not tell her where Marcadia was located. I have not revealed the location of Marcadia to any one associated with me in the selection of the children. The newspapers somehow got a story that we were planning to start an Utopian colony on an island in the Pacific Ocean. I have been content to let it rest at that.

The children who have been selected for their mental and physical fitness are sent to us here at the plant where Miss Straum takes them in charge for their final examination. The children finally accepted will all be under six years of age; our preference being for tots from two to four years old. The first steps in their education will be to uneducate them, that is; we shall endeavor to sublimate or dissociate the inhibitions and complexes planted in their subconsciousness by age-old race thinking. Especially fear complexes and others resulting from faulty teaching and social tabus. Ours is the task of cleaning their subconscious slates and preparing their minds for their real education to come later at Marcadia. Our curriculum at Marcadia shall contain none of earth's history, religion or social teachings and but little of its literature. The total number of children selected shall not exceed six; three of either sex. I expect this task will occupy us for the entire two years of our stay here while awaiting an

opposition of Mars favorable to our return. Having Miss Straum's able assistance in the training of the children, leaves much of my time free to superintend the overhauling and remodelling of the machine and the selection of a cargo for the return trip.

An amusing incident occurred a few evenings ago while Miss Straum and I were calling on the Hannons. It happened that at this time we had finally accepted five children and there were no others at hand to choose from; we wanted a little girl to complete the number we had decided on. We were seated in the Hannons' living room with the family. The Hannon baby, Martha a tot of two, was seated on my knee when I turned to Miss Straum and said: "Here is a little girl who will just fill out our list; we need look no further."

Mrs. Hannon, who was seated near, fairly leaped from her chair and caught the child to her bosom. There was a dangerous light in her eyes, and I verily believe that had I made a move toward the baby, she would have attacked me like a tigress. I was greatly amused, and Hannon fairly roared with mirth. Mrs. Hannon saw the amusing side of her action, but sought to defend the mother instinct:

"Indeed you'll not be taking my baby. How could I spare her? and besides, I think it little better than sacrilege taking folks off to another planet where the good Lord didn't put any of his own accord. And I'm thinking no good will come of it." She was much flustered. She set the baby down and it came to me at once to be taken up.

Hannon looked at his wife in astonishment: "Tut, tut, woman," he said, "May it not be that Almighty uses humans to carry out his plans? I'm thinking he does."

I glanced at Miss Straum. This was her first inkling of the fact that Marcadia is located on another planet. She tensed perceptibly and her expression was one of deep interest, but she made no remark. Several times in the past few months, she had expressed a wish that she might continue to teach the children after their arrival at Marcadia. I had engaged her to care for the children until our departure. I escorted her to her cottage that evening after we left the Hannons, but neither of alluded to the circumstance.

A few days later I asked Miss Straum if she still wished to go to Marcadia and whether the knowledge that it was located on another planet had cooled her desire. She answered: "No. Quite the contrary, that only makes your experiment the more interesting to me."

"Well," I replied, "we may draw up another contract later, but you realize, of course, that the trip to Mars involves certain risks."

"All the more reason why I should be with those babies. And then, I imagine you will have quite enough to do with managing the machine. And have you considered what an added care these children will be to Mrs. Stanton? I believe I could make myself useful; indeed I should try."

A month before the time of our departure, Miss Straum and I did enter into another contract; we went to Seattle and were quietly married there. The Hannons were the only guests. When I told Kitty and John that Vera was to accompany the children to Marcadia, they were delighted. However, I spoke of Vera as Miss Straum, keeping our marriage a secret from them as a little surprise when we reach Marcadia.

The machine is loaded and six of the finest children on earth are aboard. Vera and I have just said our last farewells to the Hannons. In a few minutes I shall apply the power and we shall leave the earth never to return.

I now bring this record to an end, seal it and address it to a friend who is as great a scientist as ever lived, but one who works quickly, caring not for the plaudits of the crowd. I am giving him liberty to use this record as he sees fit. I now say farewell to earth and place this manuscript in Hannon's hands to be delivered according to instructions.

(Signed) MARTIN HESS.

Bremen, Ger.
Jan. 1, 1919.

The manuscript to which this note is attached, was delivered into my hands by one Hannon a servant of my esteemed friend and brother scientist, Martin Hess. I have read it with astonishment, and, did I not know Hess to be a man of high moral character, one whose veracity is above suspicion, I should consider it but a figment of the imagination. And, though he has given me permission to use it as I see fit, I hesitate to publish it abroad, lest there be many who might disbelieve and thereby cast a shadow on his name. So, I shall lay it away, for the present at least, and cherish it among my greatest possessions.

(Signed) FREDERICK BOFFERMAN.

Jersey City, U. S.
July 6, 1930.

I am Carl Bofferman, nephew and only living relative of the late Frederick Bofferman of Bremen, Germany. I found this manuscript among my uncle's papers when I took over his worldly goods which he bequeathed to me. I have read it and my uncle's note appended thereto. I disagree with my uncle in one particular; I believe the public will receive this record in the right spirit, will give it due credit and will not stigmatize the name of Martin Hess or any other persons party thereto. While my uncle was a great scientist, he was something of a recluse and did not, I think, keep in touch with the world and its progress outside his line. There is little more I can add except to say that on a recent trip to the Pacific coast, I attempted to find some clue to the present whereabouts of Martin Hess, but without success. I did, however, succeed in locating the plant in the mountains described in the manuscript; it tallied in every detail with the description therein. I met Mr. Hannon who received me courteously and conducted me about the place, but he met my every attempt to learn of the whereabouts of Martin Hess with: "I have my orders concerning that, sir, and can make no statement," So I was forced to be content with that.

(Signed) CARL BOFFERMAN.

THE END.

The Valley of the Blind

By Abner J. Gelula

Author of "Automaton"

THIS is the second story by this author which we have had the good fortune to give to our readers. It tells of a strange tribe of highly developed blind people, who control the animals of the jungle by some occult influence, and of the adventures of a young American among them.

RALPH STANDISH accompanied the National Geological Expedition to Brazil solely for the adventure it might afford him. Certainly he was not essential to the party. Geology was furthest from his interests. But, since an indulgent parent, as a philanthropic member of the Museum Board of Directors, who sponsored the expedition, can usually arrange matters, Ralph trailed along.

It was scarcely a month that the party had been on this trek through the deep interior of the South American jungle, and already the monotonous routine of the slow, wearisome march through the dense underbrush palled on him. The luring promises of excitement and hazards in blazing a trail through this no-man's land had thus far failed to materialize. He cursed the day that took him from New York. Another month of this dull, hum-drum existence would be maddening!

Standish sat before the jungle campfire deep in thought. His was the last watch. In another hour the sun would again begin its torrid trip across the equatorial sky. Another stifling day would begin. Another eight or ten hour journey through the murky half-rotted vegetation would start. And when the expedition had reached its destination—then what? Dig for fossils? Seek antediluvial relics—and then finally retrace steps through this unholy jungle again? It all seemed so futile, so unreasonable.

Particularly was he vexed over the expedition commander's cognizance of a native legendary superstition; a ridiculous fear on the part of the blacks, which had resulted in a wide detour around a "forbidden" territory. It was during the late afternoon of the previous day that Standish called attention to the compass, which had indicated a sharp veering from the intended course. The guides were questioned and the reply seemed to satisfy all—except him. To take a more direct route, it was explained, would lead the party directly through a land that native mythology declared it was suicidal to enter—a place from which, no one who had entered, ever returned.

Yet, in fairness to the commander of the party, it must be said that he would have ventured the exploration of this section of the jungle, but for the strong objections of the native pack-bearers. To risk revolt in the face of a more important mission would have been foolhardy. However, the whole-hearted assurances of the natives that previous efforts to penetrate this vast uncharted territory had always been fruitless, only served to whet Standish's adventuresome appetite. The shattering of this hope, of partaking in that which savored of real adventure, brought bitter disappointment.

As he gazed into the flames of the watch-fire he mentally debated a momentous question: Why not explore this land alone? He realized that there was more than a little risk involved in disregarding the warning of the natives, but warnings only made the forbidden land more enchanting to him.

Then, again, what had he to lose? Mere wealth, as the scion of one of New York's most affluant families, meant little to him. His home ties were held by the flimsiest of threads. He was looked upon generally as a handsome, robust, blue-eyed ne'er-do-well, dependent wholly upon the family fortune and equally incapable of ever using it for anything better than polo ponies, chorus girls, and drunken orgies.

The whirlwind pace he had led during his twenty-six years of life had soured him. Although young in years, his attitude had become decrepit. Life had been forced to cram into his brief existence almost all it had to offer. He was disgusted with himself and with his career. Not one worth-while accomplishment could he chalk up to his credit despite ambitions, during his more lucid moments, to do something that might result in benefit to either himself or humanity; something more than breeding fine horses, or feeding and wining beautiful starring ladies of the chorus, or building a reputation for producing outstandingly hilarious parties. But thus far, it seemed that Fate had decreed that he should content himself with merely being an accomplished squanderer of his father's and grandfather's wealth.

He glanced around him by the dim light of the watch-

fire flames. The camp was wrapped in deep slumber. He could easily steal away. A brief note of assurance that he had not been abducted or injured would set the leaders at ease. To search for him in this wild thicket would be like looking for the proverbial "needle in a haystack." His own knapsack and equipment was close at hand. An extra belt of cartridges, a revolver and rifle were all he would take.

He must put as much distance behind him as possible before the camp wakened. He knew that, regardless of his note, a search would be made for him, and he was not unmindful of the native uncanny ability to follow the trail of a fugitive.

Distance alone could by his only assurance of security. With a cursory glance toward the sleeping camp, he quietly headed into the ominous black depths of the jungle.

GUIDED only by his compass, he half ran through thick, tangled underbrush. Hours had elapsed since his departure. The sun was already high overhead. The heat was deadening. Standish seated himself on the trunk of a fallen tree. He mopped the perspiration that poured from his face, as he studied his compass to establish himself on the correct path. Allowing only a brief few minutes' rest, he again pushed on through the heat and thicket.

It was late afternoon when he noticed that the jungle grew more open. Going had become considerably easier, and he moved more cautiously in anticipation of a reason for this change in aspect. Then, with an almost startling suddenness, the forest came to an abrupt end and, except for a scattering of trees, Standish looked out upon a vast clearing that spread below him in a gently sloping valley-like depression.

A village of considerable size lay before him. Notably striking were the construction of huts, the systematic planning of streets, the well-defined clearing of the land to the edge of the jungle, giving obvious indications that here was not an ordinary native settlement. Although distance would prevent detection, he concealed himself in the underbrush close to the edge of the cleared land. From this point of vantage he secured his first glimpse of people moving about. He swung binoculars to his eyes to secure a better view of the inhabitants in this strange village. The sight that met his gaze almost caused him to cry aloud in astonishment.

They were white people! They weren't natives! They weren't, as he had feared, a barbaric tribe! They couldn't be. The construction of the village—the planning of the streets—these alone showed a mentality at work vastly superior even to that of the so-called "civilized" native settlements.

Cautiously he advanced to a closer, more advantageous position for viewing the astoundingly interesting panorama that spread before him. There was an air of activity, of industry. From his new position he could easily distinguish the fine, clean-cut features of the inhabitants; their white skins and flaxen hair; their strong, straight, supple bodies. He noticed, also, to his surprise, that all walked nude. Lack of clothing, he feared, might eliminate his first deduction that they were even semi-civilized. He knew that even the most barbaric tribes wore some covering, and prided themselves on facial decorations as well as on bodily ornamentation. But these people wore nothing whatever—not even the customary beads that adorn even the most savage and uncivilized native.

They seemed to be a peaceful people. The display of intelligence shown by the external appearance of the village, and the business-like activity of the inhabitants, were in marked contrast to the settlements of the average barbaric deep-jungle tribe. Besides, here were people with white skin and fair hair. Surely, Standish reasoned, such beings can be approached.

As he neared the village he became increasingly perplexed. Even now, having approached within fair view of the inhabitants, scarcely two hundred feet from the center of activity, there continued to be no evidence of curiosity regarding his appearance. They paid him not the slightest attention. Carts drawn by dogs and tended by these strange people moved slowly along the well-defined streets. The use of animals, he noticed, indicated that the art of domestication had been acquired. The vehicles, crudely made, slid along on runners, like a sled. Apparently, the use of the wheel was unknown here. Smoke coming from scattered chimneys denoted the use of fire, probably for cooking, as climatic conditions in this tropic land dispensed with any necessity for warmth.

The peculiarity of their walk, also commanded his attention. Their slow and awkward gait was possessed of some indefinable trait, that gave Standish an impression of a "slow motion" film.

Yet, above all the strangeness of the sights that met his eyes, the most puzzling was the continued indifference of the people toward him. Even in barbaric native tribes, he thought, where the appearance of a stranger was not an untoward event, they gave immediate cognizance of an approach, either friendly or otherwise. But here, things seemed so different!

A group of men, apparently in conversation, a short distance away, drew his attention. Suspicious lest these unusual creatures have a manner of their own to entice unwary strangers into their midst, he kept his rifle in readiness and advanced toward them.

He halted scarcely a pace from the men. Still no recognition was given him. He watched and listened to the group but heard no word from them. Certainly, their attitudes would hardly indicate a discussion in progress. Two of the men kept their backs turned to the others; one was seated on the sun-baked ground seemingly entirely uninterested, while the fourth merely stood in the center of the group as if in silent introspection. If a conversation had been ensuing, Standish could not have guessed which individual was actually the speaker, for the method of communication was radically different from anything he had ever heard or seen. Instead of a flow of language, the speaker allowed a melodious song-like note to issue from his throat each few seconds, and this note apparently related an entire sequence of thoughts. A most marvelous language, he reflected. These people, away from the influence of the other tongues of the world, had possibly evolved a language more wonderful and expressive than any other!

Standish's interest in the group was suddenly shaken by a startling change in their attitude. The man who was seated, quickly jumped to his feet. The two men whose backs had been turned to him wheeled suddenly to face him, and the speaker halted his song-like utterances. Clearly, something had disturbed them.

As if in accord, they breathed deeply and audibly, as if sniffing the air like animals, Standish thought; like bloodhounds in quest of quarry. But they stood rigidly still and squarely faced the intruder. Their actions were so strange as to be almost terrifying.

Standish forced a smile and held up his hand in the universally recognized symbol of peace. But they evidenced no response. He watched them curiously. A finger on the trigger of his rifle took a new hold.

The men gazed at him with wide, unblinking eyes -- seemed to look through him. They acted as if they didn't see him! His attention was drawn irresistibly to their steel-blue eyes. Cold. Expressionless. They seemed

to stare into nothingness . . . unseeing . . . death-like . . . blind. Blind! That was it! They were blind! He silently stepped to one side. Their eyes did not follow him. He waved a hand in front of them. They gave no notice of any activity on his part. They only continued to sniff the air.

One man, braver than the others, hesitantly reached forward and touched him. The feel of cloth caused him to abruptly draw back as if he were burned. He uttered a single note which immediately threw the others into extreme agitation. Still they did not leave. A hasty, informal conference was apparently taking place for the melodious sounds now came more often from each of the men.

Standish studied the situation. Sightless creatures. At first he was prone to be sympathetic for these blind people. But this initial emotion was soon abandoned for one of admiration and awe and wonderment for these beings—beings who could live and progress and accomplish things without vision—beings who could successfully shut themselves off from the rest of the world and maintain a complete isolation, happy and satisfied despite an apparent handicap—beings who showed an unusually high degree of intelligence and ability without benefit of sight!

Standish was thinking as he watched the excited conversation of the group. The situation amused him. So this was the "forbidden" land! It now possessed a decidedly humorous angle. There was no reason for his fears, for his stealthy, hesitant approach, for dependence upon his rifle or physical strength. He was in a Valley of the Blind! Here he, with his vision, was a distinctly superior being. He could stay as long as he wished, and leave whenever he so desired. Here, a man with vision is king! How apropos! Even in his own civilized world this was true—literally, of course. The man with vision is a leader—singularly blessed among those who have eyes but do not see. But here was the actuality!

What a discovery! He would make a report to the Museum so momentous as to dwarf anything the rest of the party might discover. It would be a sensation! A race of people, perfect in every physical and mental detail, displaying an advanced type of civilization, living in one of the most inaccessible sections of the Brazilian jungle—Blind! He must stay and study. There would be no difficulty. He would lead these people. He would teach them. He was the man of vision in this Valley of the Blind. He was the superior being. He was the one blessed with vision among the sightless. Here he was king!

WHEN Standish again turned his attention to the group of men who seemed to be so earnestly discussing his presence, he was startled to see hundreds of the strange people coming toward him from all directions. Already scores had formed a huge circle around him and the conversing group. But, apparently distrustful of their meagre senses, they kept a safe distance leaving the decision, of what to do about this intrusion, entirely within the jurisdiction of the men who had first made contact.

Just why the people should approach at all was uncomprehensible. They couldn't see the stranger and, as yet, he hadn't spoken. But, in some indefinable way they seemed to know—seemed to sense that he was different from themselves. A continuous sniffing of the air, by the huge crowd that had gathered, sounded like a river torrent. One thing became clearly apparent: these people must have developed a super-sensitive olfactory organ. Odors brought to their minds sensations similar to color as recorded by the eye.

Standish was getting bored. To be "sniffed" at without any resulting action was like being idly gazed upon, as if he were some sort of curiosity. He might have attempted moving through the crowd, but there was no intimation of what they might be thinking. Such an action might prove hazardous. A glance at the huge muscles outlining the fine physique of these people demanded a second consideration of such a decision. He could shoot his way out, but even this might be ineffective for sheer numbers could soon overpower him. Besides, he reasoned, guns would be unlikely to frighten them, inasmuch as the power of the weapon was, no doubt, unknown to them. True, he would doubtless kill or injure several, but of what consequence would it be?

While thus considering his situation, he seemed to "feel" a strong attention focused upon him. The "sniffing" of the air had suddenly ceased. All senses seemed to center upon him. The very air seemed to be pregnant with foreboding.

One of the group stepped forward. Lack of clothing eliminated any visible decoration which might bespeak rank or influence. But the man's bearing told something of an official status about him. Standish held one hand on the revolver in the holster that hung from his belt. The man uttered the familiar song-like note. Then, as if spoken in the purest of English, the words: "Who are you, Stranger?" seemed to imbed themselves on his brain.

Standish was startled. Did someone speak to him? Who was it here that could speak his tongue? He looked around. Only a sea of faces, cold and emotionless, greeted him. It must have been his imagination.

Again came the song-like note. Again the words, clear, sharp and distinct—but unheard—"Who are you, Stranger?"

This was no play of the imagination! What fiendish powers had these people? Standish was deciding upon an answer, for undoubtedly one was expected. If these people could address him, then no doubt their uncanny sense must permit the understanding of his reply. Further, to hear his own voice in this land of silence might also tend to bolster his nerve. These people must not get the impression that he feared them.

"I come from an outside world, alone," he finally declared.

Apparently this reply had created a furor. A sudden sniffing of the air by the crowd as well as by the official group indicated excitement. Then all again became quiet. The song-note was repeated.

"Outsiders are unwelcome." The words buried deeply into his mind as if the speaker desired to add emphasis to the reply. "You will remain here but a short time only if you disobey our law. Obey, and you stay as long as you live!"

The latter part of the statement seemed most paradoxical, Standish through. However, the meaning became ominously clear as the speaker continued:

"We have but a single law for those who intrude: Never leave the confines of this domain." There was a pause, then, "No one has ever left this country alive; no an has ever brought tales about us to another people. You shall not be the first! Follow me and you shall be housed and fed and given a work to do."

The interview had abruptly ended. As rapidly as the people had gathered, so did they disband. Each went his way without further discussion or comment. Here, Standish noticed, was at least perfect order, compared to the gathering and dispersing of crowds in his own country—a country of civilized people! He took no offense at the stern commands of the spokesman. Of course he would stay. There was much to interest him here! And as to leaving—that would be decided at a later date.

The brief twilight of the tropical jungle rapidly enveloped the Valley of the Blind. Standish sat before one of the small, regular huts on the outskirts of the village. This was to be home for him, he was told. Here, while he obeyed the single edict, he might live in peace to procure whatever happiness he could find in an environment so different from his own. Here, in the hut of one of the families, a man, his wife, son and daughter, Standish found his home.

Possibly it was a sensitiveness to temperature that told these sightless creatures when night drew near, for all work had ceased. An indescribable peace and calm blanketed the village. A bright, yellow tropical moon rose with the rapid sinking of the sun. Nigi, the boy, and Laomi, the girl, emerged from the hut and seated themselves next to the stranger. The pipe Standish had been smoking had gone out, and the toyed with it between his teeth as he studied the two fine physical specimens, who so fearlessly sat beside this newcomer whom they could not see.

Nigi was a strapping lad of some twenty-two or three years. His clean, white muscular body seemed to hold the strength of a lion, and the suppleness of a tiger. He was easily six feet in height and proportionately built. His facial features, like others of the clan, were striking. The nose seemed to bespeak an ancient lineage into the Nordic; his small mouth, medium lips and fine white teeth certainly held no resemblance characteristic of the native of Brazil. His sandy-colored hair, combed back from a high forehead, accentuated the deep cavity wherein lay two blue eyes that for him, like a beard, were relics of a bygone age, when eyes were necessary for survival, and beards for facial protection.

The girl, like her brother, was an excellent specimen of physical perfection. Unhampered by the dictates of fashion, Nature had made the most of a free rein of development. Standish gazed at her enraptured. There would be little competition for beauty honors in any contest in the world if this girl were entered, he thought: ravishingly beautiful from the tips of her bare feet to the top of her curly, flaxen hair, Standish's heart skipped a beat as he stared at her. But her eyes —they were sightless. The two large, blue orbs just gazed vacantly into nothingness.

He reached into his pocket for his flashlight and turned it on her face—into her eyes. Two blue orbs—cold—expressionless. There were no pupils, he noticed. The light shining directly into her face, brought no reaction.

Then he recalled the words of the official. He could never leave the valley. That was ridiculous! He could walk out any time he pleased, and no one would be the wiser. Who was there to watch him? Who could see him? He alone had vision! Who, among this group of semi-civilized, blind creatures, could enforce demands made upon him? In the Valley of the Blind, the Man of Vision is King!

He studied the youth and the girl beside him. They hadn't moved since seating themselves. What beauty in life they were losing by their lack of sight! Only blackness before them—always. The moon, that cast its benignant glow over the village, never existed for its inhabitants. The stars twinkled aimlessly. The trees were only huge black hulks that grew out of the ground. The grass was just a soft carpet for their sensitive feet. The beauty of face and body permitted no comparison. Each seemed to be living a life within himself. Apparently, division of labor existed for the benefit of the group only so far as individual demands required. What a lonely existence, Standish thought!

Yet, as he gazed upon the faces of the pair seated so complacently beside him, he wondered if, after all, their life was really the empty endurance he imagined it to be. Certainly, they seemed happy enough. The peace and contentment that marked their features asked no sympathy from him. What they have never had, surely they never missed. And all indications pointed to the fact that sight might have made this people like the other tribes of the jungle, instead of the intellectual, civilized group they evidently were.

Standish was stirred from his reverie by the familiar song-like sound which always preceded communication. The note was uttered by Laomi. Immediately, there came clearly impressed upon his mind the words:

"You shall like our country."

This peculiar means of communication interested him. No doubt, some sort of mental telepathy must be in operation here. Being unable to telepathically transmit his thoughts, he again resorted to the use of the spoken word replying upon her mental ability to understand him. This method had proven successful in his previous "conversation" with a chieftain, and he felt certain that it would again permit contact.

"I'm sure that I shall," he replied.

Apparently the girl comprehended immediately, for she continued:

"You come from the 'Outside.' Tell us what is there."

Nigi here entered the conversation, preceding his entrance by the song-sound, concurring with Laomi's request. Standish seemed to detect a feeling of eagerness in the latter's words.

He launched upon a vivid description of his world. He told them of the huge cities in which millions lived. He described the tall, mammoth buildings in which hundreds made their home. He pictured the streets and highways alive with automobiles, and the air carrying passengers and freight laden airplanes. He depicted the oceans and the mountains; the streams and the valleys.

He cited races and nations; families and cities; dress and style; government and law; everything, in fact, did he briefly touch upon which might tell in a simple manner the wonders of his civilization.

The boy and girl listened entranced, only half believing the word-picture he painted. Never had they heard a story so weird or so fanciful. But his description had entered upon dimensions beyond their comprehension. He told what he had seen—seen with his eyes. Their basis of comparison was so slight that only the mere thread of the story could be understood. Their mind was of a different world. They could not perceive the meaning of color, nor size beyond the scope of the comparatively few objects within their immediate knowledge. In fact, any description which brought a requirement for a sense of sight passed completely beyond their power of conception.

The relating of technical advances of civilization brought little interest from the pair. But they did understand family life, cities, government and law. They evidenced also, a surprising interest in dress and style, although the subject was entirely strange to them.

"Why is it even inhabitants of warmer climates wear coverings?" Laomi questioned.

When Standish pointed out that civilization had built a demand of a moral necessity for clothes, both the boy and girl laughed. They could not understand such reasoning.

This was his first real contact with the people of the Valley. His conversation with Nigi and Laomi was bringing to him a realization that here were beings who had built a notable civilization. Cut off from the rest of the world by a physical deficiency, in spite of, or because of it, they had made remarkable progress in their own peculiar way.

The subject of the talk had turned to religion. In the discussion of this topic Standish received his first

insight into the development of a "sixth" sense by these people. Neither Laomi nor Nigi could comprehend the meaning of "church" or of "minister" or even the meaning of "Supreme Being." But they did understand the meaning of "worship."

Standish explained to the couple what was meant by these words and that "in his world" people went regularly to a house of prayer to pay homage to an Almighty.

"But why go to a definite point for the worship of one who is Omnipresent?" Nigi argued. "Our people also worship, but we do so within ourselves. The Mind —that indescribable something that exists in the Human and not in the animal—is capable of anything. And as it is trained, so will it function. To build the Mind is to improve understanding. And to improve understanding is to make life sweeter. We worship the Mind. It is immortal. It is the only distinction between Man and Beast. Only this spark of understanding, with which Man is endowed, makes him different from the animal."

Standish listened intently. There was much truth in the boy's discourse on the religion of the people. Possibly one more religiously inclined than Standish might have attempted to point out flaws in his argument. But then, he thought, could he not also find flaws in the modes of worship throughout his world?

STANDISH did not sleep well that night on his rudely made cot of interwoven fibres. The interior of the hut in which he was to make his home was composed of two rooms: a combination living room-dining-room-kitchen, the other being the sleeping quarters which he and the entire family shared. It was hot and stuffy. Several times during the night he was tempted to walk through the village, but decided against it for fear that the people, who had an uncanny sense of hearing, might misinterpret his reason for being about.

He lay on his back gazing into the intense blackness of the room. Hundreds of thoughts battled for supremacy of consideration. How did these people exist in the face of surrounding dangers: barbaric tribes, wild animals, the force of the elments? What power had they to make their livelihood, to protect themselves, to so seclude themselves, without benefit of vision? What terror did these people strike in the hearts of natives who feared to enter because no one ever returned? And why didn't anyone return? What or who could prevent him from leaving the village when he so desired? Did his friends surmise where he had gone? Would they possibly enter this country in search of him? The exhaustion of mentally reviewing a turmoil of tangled imaginings finally dropped him into a troubled sleep.

He awoke with a start. The sun was pouring through the small doorway of the hut. Tropic heat forced its sultry entrance into the room. Standish looked around him. He was alone. The others had doubtless left hours before. He dressed hurriedly and made his way through the opening.

The doorway faced a huge farm which, he learned, was a community affair. Hundreds of the people were here, toiling under the terrific heat of the equatorial sun. The row upon row of systematically planted growths were being diligently tended. He started to walk over for a closer inspection of their agricultural pursuit, when he was accosted by one of the inhabitants.

"Standish, just a moment please."

This display of immediate recognition on the part of the sightless man, and the familiarity indicated by the salutation, impressed him.

"The Council desires your presence at their quarters. You will please follow me."

Without further word, the man turned and proceeded to lead the way. Standish followed. Obviously, he had not the remotest idea what might ensue, as a result of his audience with the governmental powers of the Land. The people were strange. They were different. They thought differently and they acted differently from any peoples he had ever seen. They seemed to exhibit practically no emotions of either friendship or enmity. The chuckles of Nigi and Laomi were the only insight he had thus far received of their reactions. And their laughter had been cold—a laughter that seemed to touch the sarcastic. He would take no chances with the people until he knew more about them. The two holsters on the leather belt around his waist still held loaded pistols. He fingered them lovingly. They alone would be his only hope in the event of a clash. He trusted there would be no necessity to use them, for he wanted to learn more about these strange creatures in the Valley of the Blind.

His guide made no attempt to communicate with him during the walk, and attempts on the part of Standish to open conversation brought no response. When they arrived at Council "Chambers," the appearance of which was no different from that of any other house in the village, he was told to "Enter, please."

It was several minutes before his eyes became accustomed to the gloom of the interior: an extreme contrast to the dazzling sunlight of that open, treeless valley which he had walked.

Five men and five women were seated on a crude bench on one side of the large room. An invitation from one of the number to be seated caused him to look for some chair or similar piece of furniture. Finding none, he sat upon the hay-strewn floor. His guide, he noticed, had stationed himself at the doorway in the manner of a guard.

The man, who had requested that he be seated, was apparently the spokesman for the council, for he opened the examination.

"Why did you come here, Standish?" the inquisitor asked.

Standish hesitated a moment wondering whether he should submit to questioning. Yet, he considered, it would gain him nothing to antagonize the people, so he replied, truthfully:

"Through curiosity. The natives beyond the surrounding jungle spoke of this valley. To them, its existence is merely a legend. I was determined to find out for myself."

"We know nothing about your world, other than its existence," the spokesman declared. "Occasionally one of your kind will find his way into our country, but in every instance he has forfeited his life in disregarding the edict that he must never attempt to leave here. We extend every welcome and reiterate the warning. We sincerely trust that you will accustom yourself to our existence, abide by our regulations and become a part of our community. Be assured that escape is impossible. Put such plans out of your mind. The people of this land do not desire contact with an outside—with a different world. No one has ever taken reports from here which would obviously result in receiving a huge visitation from your kind, and the ultimate destruction of our identity and superiority. This shall never be!"

Standish listened with skepticism. Only ignorant natives had ever dared to enter here. It might be a comparatively easy matter to prevent one of the superstitious blacks from leaving. He credited the people with having that much power—whatever it might be. Yet there was a note of seriousness in the entire situa-

tion. The natives, despite their ignorance and superstition, have sight. Why couldn't they escape if they so desired? He noticed that these people possessed no weapons, and if they did, surely they would be of no value against a man with vision. The people never moved in any manner other than their slow, peculiar way. Even a child could easily outdistance the inhabitants in a dash for the jungle.

The explorer gazed at the ten seated before him. Despite their lack of regalia customary to an official court in even the most lowly tribes, there seemed to be a certain dignity about them. Their characteristically fine features and physique became even more pronounced in the officiousness of their station. These people were unique. The pause was broken by another question from the spokesman:

"Along what lines have you been trained, Standish?"

Standish hesitated. His training was little more than a higher education in literacy. He had never thought of "training" in this sense. He was exploring —an explorer—that was it!

A short conference seemed to take place, although the rigidity of the council was undisturbed. Standish was beginning to recognize indications other than physical movement when conversation was held.

"Your training would be of little consequence here," the man resumed. "We have no need for external exploration. Only the Mind is unexplored. You will learn as time passes, that the Mind is all-powerful. Your people, who still cling to the antiquated organ of sight, will be unable to properly develop the important, innermost recesses of the mind, until ages alone will prove that your now most precious sense is actually the most detrimental to advancement.

"What of your civilization, your buildings, your science? What does it mean? What has it brought to you? As typical of all who have come before this council, you have no real culture, no contentment, no happiness. It is all artificial—all manufactured. We have no huge buildings. We have no wonders of physical science. Only in one way are we identical—we are endowed with life. And, while life exists in the body, the things that your puny minds demand as actualities, our developed mentality can conjure. We have learned that to exist with minimum physical pain and maximum mental pleasure makes living worth while. Otherwise, what is there in mere existence?

"We would gladly share our development with all the world, but your people with vision would be unable to understand. Would you, for instance, be willing to submit to having your sight removed, and then be placed under our guidance for mental training? The same offer has been extended countless times to others of your clan who have ventured into our land. But never has it been accepted. Would you submit to this?"

Standish was impressed by this discourse. The Councilman had clearly and most convincingly presented his side of the question. But this latter inquiry—did it hold a threat—was it a demand carefully veiled in the form of an offer? Possibly this was the solution to the problem why no one who entered here ever returned.

He assured his interrogator, without hesitation, that obviously he would never consent to such a proposition.

"It is impossible," the Councilman continued, "to develop a desirable degree of mental ability as long as the brain is dependent upon the sense of sight. Our race has proven this fact. Historical legend tells us that centuries ago, our people were also dependent upon the sense of sight. But a gradual atrophy of the optic organs with a corresponding compensation in mentality, has brought about an intellectual advance far greater than the progress your people have made in ages!

"No doubt, along technical lines, your advance might be more pronounced. But such progress would not interest us. We are interested solely in life, and how to live. We are interested in culture—in the proper appreciation of life and what it may have to offer. However, we are an open-minded people. Anything that you offer to make life happier, or people more contented, shall receive our whole-hearted endorsement. We offer to you a place in our community. We do not insist upon your cooperative attitude: that you take a small part in our scheme of things. Inasmuch as it is impossible for you to leave the jurisdiction of this country, we are sure that, from your own standpoint, you will be happier by being self-supporting and by contributing toward the general welfare of our community."

Standish readily agreed to do his part in the community work and voiced his appreciation of the council's attitude toward him. He continued, however, to inwardly scoff at the suggestion that the people could in any way detain him when he desired to leave. The opportunity here proffered him to become a part of the community, thus providing means of learning in first-hasd fashion everything regarding their life, was immediately seized upon.

"You are herewith detailed to labor in the agricultural section and follow such subsequent orders pertaining to your work as may be given to you. That will be all."

The interview was ended. Standish was now a part of the community. Of the thousands of inhabitants, he alone had vision. Even the council, for all their ability of self-proclaimed superior mentality, could not see the smile of disbelief that covered his face as they spoke to him. To Standish, they seemed to be mere children who must be humored to keep within their good graces.

THE heat of the tropic sun beat unmercifully upon Ralph Standish as he tended the young plants in the vast community farm the following day. For hours, since sunrise, he toiled with hundreds of others, on his hands and knees, "setting" the growths.

He halted every few minutes to mop the perspiration that poured from his brow. His clothes were wringing wet with sweat. Finally, he stood up and watched others singing while they worked, unmindful of the scorching rays of the sun despite their unprotected bodies. No one used tools in the present work. The ground had been plowed, the seeds were sown, and the plants were tended, by thousands of the able fingers. Standish rubbed his hands together to remove the grime of the soil.

He decided that he had worked sufficiently for one day. He must look around. He wasn't going to stay in the Valley much longer. He had notes to take. He had to learn more of these people. His name must some day be a memorable part of the history of exploration.

He stalked out of the field as he turned this latter thought over in his mind. And why work at all, he asked himself? He held no interest in this village save a scientific one. Whether he worked in the fields or not, was surely beyond the determination of these sightless creatures.

Unconsciously he walked toward the inviting shade of a large over-hanging tree, there to stretch his fatigued body upon the cooling grass. His hands under his head, he gazed into the dazzling blueness of the sky and recounted the events of the past two days.

But he did not ponder long, for suddenly he was conscious of a man standing beside him. Casually, Standish looked up at the towering physique. The man could not see him, so why be concerned? Resolutely, the man stood beside him, arms folded, as if guarding

his prey. The explorer could not help but admire the perfect muscular control of the man. He had approached noiselessly and now stood over him without so much as the quiver of a muscle. A study of the firm expression on the man's face revealed not the slightest trace of emotion. It was impossible to tell whether the intruder felt satisfaction in finding Standish, or whether this coming upon him was an accident or a surprise; whether this man was a friend or whether he was an enemy. Like a statue, he stood motionless beside him.

Standish slowly arose, looked squarely in the man's face, and proceeded to leave.

"You will follow me," the newcomer suddenly directed him.

Standish halted. He turned and looked at the man quizzically. What did these people take him for?—a puppet? Had they but to command and he would dance? These poor, blind creatures were taking themselves entirely too seriously. This foolishness had gone far enough!

"Please go away, I do not care to go with you now," Standish replied, vexed, and he again turned to leave.

"You are ordered by Council to follow me," the man repeated. The emphasis of his telepathic speech seemed to bore into his brain! It was maddening!

"Damn Council," he snapped. "If they want me, tell them to come and get me!"

The messenger, abandoning the usual slow, almost clumsy, movement, characteristic of the people, leaped with a remarkable agility toward the retreating man. Standish was astounded at the swiftness of the courier. If he had eyes, he couldn't have judged the distance more accurately nor made the bound toward him with greater confidence. He was spell-bound at this display. Indeed, he had greatly underestimated the abilities of this people. So rapidly did the action of the moment transpire, that Standish was held tightly in a grip of steel, both hands behind his back, before he thoroughly realized that apparently he was being made prisoner.

To resist his captor would be foolish. He could no more break away than if he were manacled with chain. He felt like a baby in the hands of this creature—and he was no weakling in his own world. If he could have reached his pistol, the strength of the man would be of little consequence, he soliloquized, in an effort to redeem in own hurt pride. Well, he would be smarter next time!

Inasmuch as the huts all had the same appearance, Standish could not yet recognize the one which housed the governing officials. But, by some sixth sense, the guard steered him directly toward it. He stooped to enter the small doorway and again found himself in the austere presence of the council of ten. As before, he was directed to be seated before them.

"We are not unaware of the fact that your physical endurance has not yet become accustomed to continued exposure to the heat of the day," the spokesman began without further introductory remarks. "You will be relieved of duty at half-time for the next five working periods until you have adapted yourself to conditions. Do not again be guilty of shirking your prescribed work. Saprophites do not exist here. That is all." (The word literally means rotten plants.)

He uttered not a word in his own defense, nor was he questioned regarding a possible reason for his dilatory attitude. They had presented the motive, the defense, and had passed judgment for his act. The entire procedure seemed too ridiculous, so absurd. Standish resented this attempt to enforce the regulation of his activities in the community. These people were taking themselves entirely too seriously! Who were they to presume that a mere word should become law for him . . . he alone who had vision in this Valley of the Blind!

An increasing rage, that might have led to dire consequences, was conquered by his better judgment and a view of the ludicrous position in which he pictured himself. The blind council could not detect the cynical smile that replaced his expression of heated anger, as he swept past the guard with folded arms, into the glare of the equatorial sunlight.

Resolutely Standish walked toward the hut that was "home" for him. It would take but a few minutes to gather up his knapsack and leave this unholy band of creatures. He had seen enough to make his report to the Museum a most interesting one—and possibly arrange another exploration party for a more detailed investigation at a later date. Yet, as he strode across the wide, grassy piazza, he couldn't help but admire in awe the uncanny power demonstrated by these people, which permitted such display of judgment and accuracy without benefit of vision. After all, how could they know he had left the field? How did they locate him so easily? There must be something more to these people than his mere superficial examination had indicated. He would return with men better versed in the study of races for further research!

Hastily, he threw the knapsack across his back and with rifle in hand halted a moment at the doorway of the hut before emerging to start his journey across the open valley and into the depths of the distant jungle. Unconsciously he glanced in all directions to determine if his "escape" was detected. Then he laughed. Why, these people were actually getting on his nerves! He had almost believed himself a prisoner—attempting to escape—fearful lest he be seen—in a land of blind men!

Without further hesitation, and with an ostentatious wave of farewell, Standish headed toward the forest. Looking back, he saw the people diligently at their work, blissfully unaware that their visitor had left their midst, to return later with a more extensive plan of investigation.

The mid-day rays of the sun beat down unmercifully in the open expanse of the valley. But Standish walked with a song in his heart, unmindful of the heat, for he had made a momentous discovery. All the world would soon learn that Ralph Standish was not the ne'er-do-well son of a rich father. He had accomplished something in his own right! He had made a place for himself in the eyes of men! The cool verdant jungle beckoned ahead. In a week he would be sailing for New York! The thoughts lent wings to his feet.

A series of muffled growls brought him suddenly from his reveries. He stopped and peered into the black thicket that loomed before him. What he saw almost paralyzed him with fear. Then, at the edge of the jungle, a group of pumas paced nervously back and forth. They halted and gazed out at him. A hasty glance revealed no less than eight of the giant cats. A concerted charge on their part would leave no hope to evade them. He had learned enough of the habits of these animals to realize that such action was far from remote. Any attempt to enter the jungle at this point would be sheer suicide.

His fingers renewed their grip on the trigger of the rifle. A huge tree, a few paces away, promised a safe retreat until the beasts would leave the vicinity. Still, he thought, there were many trees. He might find a more safe entrance into the jungle at another point and if danger threatened, any tree would provide a temporary haven.

Slowly he retreated from the puma group, his eyes

What he saw almost paralyzed him with fear. There, at the edge of the jungle, a group of pumas paced nervously back and forth. They halted and gazed out at him.

watching their every move; his nerves tensed, ready for any required dash to safety. But the animals were also alert to his action. As he proceeded, parallel to the edge of the thicket, scarcely a hundred yards from the edge, they followed. Always close to the clearing, yet never out of the forest, as if invisible bars prevented their egress. For almost a half-mile along the jungle edge, Standish sought a spot that might permit him to safely enter and continue his journey. But always the huge cats presented an insurmountable barrier; always on the brink of the clearance, yet never crossing the boundary.

Then, as if in sudden accord, the animals gave vent to a wild blood-curdling roar and dashed into the clearing toward him. Happily, a tree was close at hand. He hastily dropped his gun and pack, and leaped for the lowest branch that hung overhead.

Scarcely a few seconds elapsed before the cats were beneath the tree, several looking hungrily upward toward their prey. Standish whipped out one of the two pistols he carried, in anticipation of a tree-climbing attack. It was little more than minutes before one of the more hardly of the pack leaped toward the lower branch. Carefully aiming, his gun spat twice. The puma dropped through the branches into the midst of his blood-thirsty brothers.

Hours elapsed. Already the sun was rapidly sinking and the animals showed no indication of leaving the tree unguarded. To sleep would be sheer suicide. Even if he didn't accidently lose his hold among the branches, one of the beasts would certainly make its way to him. How long would they remain? He might force himself to keep awake through the night, but how about the following day? Could he ever forsake this place in the tree? To attempt to shoot the increased number of pumas surrounding the tree was ridiculous. There must have been scores of the animals.

Where they had all come from was beyond his imagination.

Suddenly, through the gloom of the twilight, two figures loomed in the distance. Standish screamed a warning to them to beware of the animals surrounding the tree. But they either didn't hear or didn't heed, for they continued to head their steps directly toward him. The shouted warnings to them ceased when he saw their determined lack of regard for caution. It would be a slaughter. They were no more than one hundred feet away and he put his arm before his eyes to blot out the sight of an impending tragedy. But the anticipated fatal event failed to materialize.

There were no screams. No cries of anguish. No startled shrieks. He removed the arm that shut out the fearful vision. As two figures stood directly beneath the tree, the huge, blood-thirsty cats crowded around them, but offered them no harm. He peered closely through the dim light of the waning day. They were people from the Valley! Had they no fear? Were they immune to attack? He called to them. Their timely arrival was almost miraculous! Standish almost cried in sheer happiness at being thus delivered from an almost certain death.

"Come down. You need have no fear of the beasts," the two assured him. Their presence in the midst of the growling, ferocious beasts required no further words of assurance. He hesitantly climbed down from the tree and stationed himself between his two blind rescuers. He looked at them. It was Nigi! Good old Nigi! He glanced at his companion. It was Laomi! This was true friendship! To brave the terrors of the wild beasts to save him. Standish was overcome with gratitude. Only the precariousness of their position prevented him from throwing his arms around the two and hugging them in an ecstasy of thankfulness.

But Nigi and Laomi held themselves rigidly aloof from his profuse words of appreciation. His verbose gratefulness fell upon deaf ears. Each held Standish by an arm and the three proceeded to walk directly into the midst of the animals. As if the trio were encompassed with fire, the cats slunk aside permitting unmolested passage to the Valley.

Absolute silence prevailed during the first quarter-hour of their return walk. Then Laomi breathed a heavy sigh as if relieved of a burdensome care. The tenseness of the situation relaxed. Nigi, too, seemed to become his old self again.

"The council must never know that you left the Valley," Laomi said, in opening the conversation. "You were warned never to leave. They learned you were missing and proceeded to prevent a successful departure. We risk dire punishment should it ever be known that Nigi and I intruded upon the workings of the Council!"

Thus far, the girl was speaking in riddles as far as Standish was concerned. Of course, he knew of the warning, but—— Then, it suddenly dawned upon him. Could it be that the pumas were "guided" by the people of the valley? Had they by the use of their super-powerful minds, directed the activities of the beasts in an almost successful attempt to prevent his ever leaving the Valley?

As if he had comprehended these thoughts, Nigi replied, "The Council still believes that their mind is keeping you a prisoner of the pumas. When they learn of your presence in the Valley, to-morrow, it is quite possible that they will feel they were mistaken in thinking you had left the community. Never has anyone escaped from the Valley alive, and it must never be known that Laomi and I defied their combined wills to return you to our midst."

Nothing more was said during the return journey. Quietly the three stole into the hut and into their cots. The boy and girl were wrapped in slumber almost as soon as they had stretched their fatigued bodies on the rude mattresses. But Standish gazed for hours into the blackness of the night as he lay upon his rough fibre bed, thinking. . . .

As Nigi had foretold, no mention was made of Standish's attempted escape, and he proceeded about his assigned duties on the farm as if nothing untoward had occurred.

But even as he labored beneath the sweltering sun on the huge cultivated tract, his thoughts continued to lay plans for possible future escape. He could scarcely believe that his past attempt was not thwarted by mere coincidence. But he could not forget the impunity with which Nigi and Laomi had walked into the group of savage beasts, and the thought returned him sharply to the stark reality and hopelessness of the situation.

It required the event of several nights later to firmly establish in Standish an entirely new respect—almost an awe—for the mental capacities of the inhabitants in the Valley of the Blind.

Standish was awakened suddenly by a feeling of an unexplicable, ominous foreboding. The sun had not yet risen, and a glance at his watch showed the time to be just two hours past midnight. He struck a match in the pitch blackness of the hut. Only Laomi was there, her form silhouetted against the open doorway. Lying prone, her hands under her chin, she seemed to be listening intently. Standish arose and walked over to her.

"What is the trouble?" he inquired.

The girl drew back suddenly. "Oh, it's you, Stan-

dish," she acknowledged. There seemed to be a tone of relief in her voice.

"Just a native raid," she explained, nonchalantly. Her words seemed to reveal nothing untoward in a matter apparently quite serious. Indeed, she seemed to be enjoying the thrill experienced by hearing a conglomeration of blood-curdling yells and cries arising in the distant fields. Standish looked through the doorway. A full moon cast its silvery radiance over the open valley. In the distance, the forms of countless natives, spears overhead, could be vaguely seen racing across the verdant savannah. Their whoops of conquest rent the tropic air. Against such odds, what chance had any tribe—especially these blind people! Death appeared certain.

Standish drew his pistols. At least he would account for plenty before they reached him—and Laomi.

But the girl's utter lack of fear in the face of almost certain destruction incited the curiosity of the explorer. Did she realize the seriousness of the situation? She seemed almost enthusiastic over the outlook! Her reaction to the prospect of being killed by the approaching hordes "from the outside," was beyond comprehension.

"They're getting closer, Laomi," Standish whispered.

The girl threw back her hair as if in defiance of the warning. "Suppose they are! They will never get near the village," she replied with a fierce confidence. Then, again centering her attentions on the wild war-cries of the invaders, she implored excitedly, "Just listen to them! How they scream! How sure they are that by mere physical numbers they can force entry into our domain! And how stupid they must be! Will they never learn that these invasions are little better than suicide?"

Laomi was thinking "out loud." Even in times of emotional stress her highly developed mind would argue and reason the question at hand. But Standish received the impressions. He was about to ask her for a further explanation of her interjections, when he noticed that the cries of battle and lust had suddenly changed to screams of fear and anguish. He strained his eyes to pierce the distance across the moonlit field. The natives were no longer advancing. A battle seemed to be ensuing. Roars and grunts and screeches mingled with cries from human throats. The battle drew closer. It now became clearly visible.

Standish involuntarily drew back in horror. There, upon the open field, hundreds of natives fought a vain contest against thousands of beasts of the jungle. Pumas, jaguars and great apes were slashing, tearing and ripping every form they contacted.

Standish stepped out of the hut in breathless awe to better view the battle of the ages. How futile were the puny efforts of the natives against this onslaught! Even civilized man, with modern weapons of defense might find such odds too great.

But what brought the beasts of the jungle to the rescue? Surely neither their timely arrival nor the single-purposeness of their attack was mere coincidence. Standish pondered the question as he stood engrossed watching the fierce struggle taking place before him. Then it struck him as he stood there, that the village had become exceptionally quiet and lacked the reign of terror one might expect under such circumstances. Was this slaughter so ordinary an event to the people that it should cause no agitation or reaction among them?

Standish turned toward the center of the village. A large group of the people, possibly two or three hundred, he estimated, were massed closely together. Advancing, he noticed that each had clasped another's hand, forming a huge, human chain. A deep, intense silence prevailed, broken only by the roars and screams of the battle raging on the outskirts of the community.

He watched curiously. Had this unusual formation of the group, the extreme quiet, and the peculiar manner of the people some connection with the arrival of the animal's, he pondered? Then, like a flash, came the realization: the super-powerful minds of the inhabitants could reach out and control the very activity of the jungle! They had but to call, and the animals responded! Concentration. The minds of the natives, apparently, were a bit too highly developed to control directly—to force them to turn back. But the animal mind came easily within the scope of their sweeping influence.

The noise of battle had died away. Only the intermittant sounds of stray animals, who had not yet returned to their haunts, carried across the fields. Standish returned to the hut and gazed at the scene in the distance. Some upright forms were yet moving about. Surely it was not possible that any of the natives had survived that awful melee! But more careful visual investigation brought another shock. The forms that were moving about on the field were not human beings, but huge apes—scores of them! And each carried the prostrate body of an invading native back to the depths of the forest! They were clearing the battlefield!

A shudder of disgust ran through his frame. Turning, he re-entered the hut. Laomi's father, mother and brother had not yet returned.

"Wasn't that wonderful?" the girl greeted excitedly. "Some day my mentality will be sufficiently developed to enter the Control Circle," she declared ambitiously.

Standish didn't feel in the mood for conversation or for a discussion of the recent massacre. He was shaken by the sight he had witnessed. He was awed by the display of mental powers. He was overcome with disgust and discouragement.

The events of the past half hour had completely changed him. He chuckled bitterly—half crying—as he thought of early ambitions upon his arrival among the people. "I would be king!" he reminded himself sarcastically. Laomi became startled as he broke into a wild, hilarious laughter. "King!" he cried, "the blind man is king! In the Valley of the Blind the man with vision is an outcast!"

Standish buried his head in his hands and wept.

PART II

TIME had ceased to hold significance for Ralph Standish. The passing of a year brought only a partially completed adaptation to a situation which had long since grown monotonous. His definite realization that escape from the all-powerful mental vigilance of the people was impossible, aided only in completing his misery. Their mental control over the animal kingdom made the Valley a veritable prison for him. And their keen ability to sense anything amiss, made plans of escape futile.

The many occasions that arose during the year which necessitated the demonstration of their power, brought him conclusive proof that mere "civilized" man would be hard put to compete with the supermentality of these creatures in the Valley of the Blind.

Yet, there were times, Standish realized, when he seemed actually happy in this new environment. But these rare occasions were hidden in deep shadows of depression, when he was seized with an almost unconquerable longing to return to his own country—his own people and his own surroundings. Oftimes he was sorely tempted to risk the certain death of escape

through the jungle—just to get away—away from these blind people who had vision. Death might even be a welcome relief from these beings who found their joys and pleasures—their delights and entertainment—in the development of mental power—mental culture—mental vision. It was maddening!

Often he attempted to analyze his feelings, but could never arrive at a more satisfactory solution than being merely "homesick." He could make no complaint regarding the attitude of the people toward him. Surely an unwelcome guest was never treated with greater sympathy or with a more genuine understanding. In his country, Standish meditated, an unwelcome visitor was made to feel distinctly unwelcome, while here he was urged to make himself a part of the community. Always were they thoroughly considerate and sympathetic of his every action. Possibly, he reasoned, it might be disappointment that ruled his feelings toward the inhabitants of the Valley. Surely, it was a logical deduction to believe that here, among blind men, he with vision, would be supreme! In his wanderings everywhere, unfortunates bereft of sight were helpless. But here, the situation was reversed—he was the one singled out for pity and in need of aid!

Yet during the year, he had given good account of himself. He had taught them the use of the wheel. He had directed them in the construction of better houses. He had instructed them in the art of weaving. He improved their crude method of grinding the grain. He had enlightened them on the use of fire. He made rude tools to replace the direct use of hands in the field. In countless ways did he build a place for himself in the estimation of these people who, despite their mental precocities, seemed so devoid of practical ability, as to be unable to develop even the rudest implements or methods conceived by pre-historic man. Deprived of sight, mental expansion became a necessity for survival. Deprived of vision, the basic ideas of invention as exhibited by Nature, were lost.

The people, as a group, were cold emotionally. But for the fact that they recognized the existence of the family as the foundation of the community, Standish could never have tolerated existence among these beings. Obviously, the lack of a sense organ, so essential to all living creatures, must result in a development radically different from the rest of the human family, and this difference was sharply indicated by their emotional deficiency. The only sincere cordiality existing for him in the valley came from the family with whom he made his home—and particularly from Nigi and Laomi.

Realizing that alone he could make little headway in establishing himself in the community, he found in Nigi a staunch ally. Night after night, in the cool of the tropic evening, the two would sit beside the hut. From the boy he learned of the ways and manners of the people. From Standish, the boy rapidly mastered the details of simpler labor-saving devices so common in the world of sight. The lack of vision presented no obstacle for Nigi. He could work just as cleverly with his hands as more fortunate students.

And often Laomi squatted nearby, listening intently to the explanations of Standish in describing the construction of some new tool that Nigi would soon introduce to the people. Under the direction of Standish, the boy was busily engaged in the rude materialization of a plow. This device would revolutionize the agricultural pursuits of the Valley, Nigi declared. And for hours each night, with a sharpened stone, the blind boy patiently cut the rough wood until the plow took shape. Lovingly, he felt the tangled mass of wood and fibre. His mind, like all others of the community, had never been led along channels of original construction. He had lived only in the mentally ethereal world of his people, and the opening of these new lanes of practical thought made Standish a genius in the eyes of Nigi—and Laomi. And, conversely, the admiration that Standish held for the people was centered on the boy and girl. They alone, through the interest they had afforded him, prevented the oft-contemplated suicidal dash through the jungle.

It was during one of these evenings, while Nigi was busily engaged in building the plow, and Laomi sat in her usual position beside the hut, that Standish first seriously thought of his future.

He had reconciled himself to the fact that unless some miracle occurred, the remainder of his years must be spent in this world-forsaken spot. Thus far, his only interest in the people had been a scientific one. Obviously, unless he could report his findings to his own kind, of what value to the world was his existence here? And, he had become convinced that to leave would be impossible. Aside from a casual interest on the part of the public, there was no one in his own country who would mourn his absence. Doubtless, even now, he was forgotten.

What mattered it where he was, if he could be happy and content. The craving for sight of civilization was not as keen as during the earlier months of his enforced residence in the Valley. He could be happy here, he was sure. Time would bring understanding. The lack of sight on the part of the people would eventually become of lesser significance and an increasing admiration must certainly result.

And then there was Laomi. Only recently did he come to realize that his regard for this beautiful, well-proportioned, flaxen-haired girl was something more than a mere interest. He looked at her as she sat beside him seemingly gazing into nothingness—dreaming of a world she could never see.

"What are you thinking about, Laomi?" he murmured.

She lifted her head as if to watch the twinkling of the stars in the equatorial splendor of the heavens.

"About the things, the places you once described to me," she replied, thoughtfully. "It is wonderful to think about. I am so sorry you can never return to them. You must miss them so!"

Only from Laomi did he ever hear words of sympathy. She alone seemed to sense the struggle that took place within him. His heart went out to her completely.

"No, Laomi," he replied softly, "I don't miss them—any more. I want to stay here—work here—live here with you!"

The girl made no reply. She seemed unmoved by his words. Standish moved closer to her. He clutched her hand.

"Laomi," he pleaded, "I love you. I want you for always and always! Don't you understand? Laomi, tell me—speak to me. You're all I have in the world—you're all I want." He pressed her hand to his lips. "Laomi, marry me—I love you so!"

Reluctantly, she drew herself from him. "You mustn't," she entreated. "It can never be. You're different." She hesitated as if her words might hurt him. "You have eyes that see; your world is different from mine and my people's. The Council would never allow us to marry. But I do love you, Standish!"

He swept her into his arms. These people could prevent him from leaving the Valley, but they could never stand between him and Laomi! He would go to the Council and tell them. They would understand. He wanted to live here—stay here always. He would become really a part of the community. What mattered

it if he had vision? It would interfere neither with his work nor theirs. He would tell them. They must approve! It was his right. They dare not stand in the way of happiness for him and Laomi!

The girl snuggled closer. Only Nigi's soft weird chant, as he worked upon the plow, broke the silence of the Brazilian night.

With awe and obeisance Ralph Standish again faced the Governing Council of the Valley of the Blind. In accordance with the law of the community, he must ask official sanction of marriage from these ten officials; he had come to present before them his claims of worthiness for the hand of Laomi. Almost a year had passed since last he entered these chambers. He hoped they had forgotten his previous arrogance and insulting attitude of self-sufficiency. That was during his early ambitions of domination: before he had learned that in the Valley of the Blind, the man with vision is an outcast!

Standish presented his plea. He didn't want to return to his world of men, he entreated. He wished to remain and work and live and die among the people of his loved one. He would prove his worth! Rather would he brave death by escape into the jungle, than live in the Valley without Laomi.

The Council listened. The emotionless faces before him brought no hint of acceptance or rejection. But their blind eyes seemed to pierce him as he made his impassioned entreaty. The air was charged with uncertainty. They could not refuse this request or permission to marry. Even by this action of seeking permission to marry the girl he loved, he demonstrated his desire to live according to the laws set down the people. In tears, he implored their acquiescense.

An oppressive silence, almost foreboding, fell upon the room. With no visible change in the appearance or expression of the Council, the members had begun their telepathic conference.

Standish gazed at the five men and five women arrayed before him. Even while he spoke, he sensed a futility to his appeal. He was different. To them, his comparative deficient mentality placed him almost in the same category with the barbaric native. Their senses could distinguish no difference. Only vision could indicate that his skin was white and, except for sight, was physically like themselves. Certainly they must believe him more docile than others who had inadvertently visited the Valley. He, at least, had remained for a considerable length of time. The others either didn't heed the warning against escape, or were too dull to appreciate the power these people could exert against the successful accomplishment of such attempt. Certainly, there was some evidence on his behalf that he was mentally above the Brazilian Indian, aside from considerations of his introducing various practical aids to the people.

The length of time the Council consumed before passing judgment was indicative of a debate regarding his acceptability. Suppose they refused, what then? Standish was in a quandary. He was determined that without Laomi, he would remain no longer in the Valley. He still had his rifle and two pistols. If again cornered by telepathically controlled beasts of the jungle, he could at least give good account of himself. But why think of that? He didn't want to leave. He wanted to stay and live his days in the peace and happiness and contentment of the Valley—with Laomi. Nothing else mattered. Gladly would he sacrifice the gregarious lure of civilization for her. His world could hold no charms to compete with those of the girl he loved.

"Standish!" They had called his name. The Council had reached a decision. He listened with bated breath as the spokesman related the verdict.

"The Council is agreed"—his heart leaped—"that the union you propose would jeopardize the well-being of future generations. The ages alone have brought our people to the present high plane of mental development, with the consequential abandonment of sight. Our present state could never have been achieved, but for the erasure of this sense which has prevented the further development of the brain in other peoples. Dependence upon this sense eliminates the necessity or demand for expansion of the mind. The atavistic possibilities of your offspring—of their having vision which would block their mental advance—is particularly strong. This obviously, would result in an eventual deteriorization of our people. The Council forbids this marriage under the present conditions."

Standish's spirit was crushed. Yet, this latter sentence seemed to bring a ray of hope. " . . . under the present condition." The speaker seemed to indicate that the decision was not neessarily final. What conditions? The verdict seemed to be left in the air.

"Does that mean that the future may produce a possibility of permission?" he ventured. Standish clung to the thread of hope held out to him. He realized the biological truth of the fact pointed out by the Council. Despite his meagre medical knowledge, Standish recognized the fact that such tendencies were more than mere possibilities. But the reply he received from the Council came as a distinct shock for it clearly exhibited their colossal ignorance of even the fundamental principles of eugenics.

"We are not unmindful of the value you place upon your sense of sight. To ask that you sacrifice this sense in behalf of your progeny, or else to cease your affection for the girl you desire, presents the requirement that you make a difficult decision. The Council desires to welcome you fully into this community as one of us, physically and mentally. You are assured that with the further development of your mentality, the demand for vision will decrease correspondingly. The decision is in your hands: Allow the elimination of your sight, unite with Laomi, and become as one of us. Maintain your demand of vision and continue to live as you have: alone—a prisoner held within the confines of this land."

LAOMI listened as Standish related the requirements made upon him. To willingly be blinded by those without vision! To approve of shutting out forever the beauties of Nature? To forsake the clinging hope of ever again seeing the world of men! This was the price he was asked to pay for her.

Laomi could offer but little sympathy. She could not understand his hesitancy. After all, she and her people considered vision a handicap to happiness and contentment. She could realize no advantage that sight could bring. Love alone meant everything to her. And the demand of the Council was only a desire to make Standish "normal," and to justly permit the marriage according to the code of the people.

Obviously, Laomi could never appreciate the struggle that consumed Standish. His eyes! His sight! This was the bounty they demanded for his right to love and cherish the girl he sought! Even she thought the price fair—she could not understand.

But he loved her. Nothing else mattered. She without eyes would be his sight until Nature, in her kindliness, would enable him to re-adapt himself to a new death. To remain meant blindness. Which was preferable? Without the love of Laomi, the choice would

have been easy. With her love, to decide became a struggle.

Laomi nestled closer. Tears welled into his eyes as she relaxed in his embrace. "Laomi, Laomi, I love you," he whispered as he buried his face in her soft, flaxen hair.

"And I love you, Standish, for always."

He gazed upon the beauty of her face in silence as the tropic moon spread its brilliance over a land he might never see again!

FOR the two weeks following the declaration of his decision to the Council, Standish was busily occupied in the construction of a hut that would be the home for him and his bride. All his constructive skill went into the building of this place that must house him until the end of his days in the Valley. Nigi and his neighbors attempted to aid him, but they seemed slow and clumsy with their hands and, despite their display of willingness to help, their assistance was of no consequence.

As he worked he thought—thought of his decision—of Laomi and his future here. Would he regret his decision despite his love for Laomi? Would he mourn the loss of the sight of things that to him had meant life and happiness? He assuaged these reflections by a prevailing dominant consideration:—if ever life became wearisome, death presented an escape—the only escape available regardless of whether he retained his vision or not!

Another of the monotonous, sultry days broke the brief tropical dawn. All night he sat outside the tiny hut he had completed. He had watched the moon rise and set. He had seen the bright, twinkling stars appear and fade with the advent of the sun. It was a night he would never forget . . . so quiet . . . so peaceful . . . so calm. It was his farewell sight of the heavens . . . the trees . . . of the flowers . . . of the jungle. This day he would pay the price of citizenship in the Valley of the Blind. To-day he would make his sacrifice on the altar of love for Laomi. To-day he would forever set aside his crown of ambition. "In the Valley of the Blind, the man with vision is King!" He smiled cynically. In the Valley of the Blind, he who gropes best in the darkness is hailed as leader! In the Valley of the Blind, the man with vision is an outcast! In the Valley of the Blind, the blindest is King!

Standish shrugged his shoulders. What did it matter? He loved Laomi and that was life and happiness to him. He stirred from his reveries as a Council messenger approached him.

"Standish, the Council awaits you."

The messenger's cryptic statement carried a full meaning. Sluggishly he arose and, as if in a dream, followed the man to the Council chambers. There was no curious milling crowd awaiting him to gape as he submitted to the torture of being blinded; no ceremony or break in the quiet procedure of the village; no indication that any untoward event was about to take place. He appreciated the consideration of the people. Certainly, it was a far greater consideration than was given any prisoner in his civilized land.

Standish walked slowly through the doorway. Inside he saw nothing more unusual than the presence of four men, other than the members of the Council. They took on the attitude of guards: two standing at rigid attention on each side of the doorway, stiffly erect and powerful, muscular arms folded across, their naked chests. A marked solemnity seemed to pervade the chambers. A horrifying quiet held sway. He stopped as he crossed the threshold.

For the first time panic seized him. What was he doing? Had he been in a trance? Was he dreaming? Furtively, he glanced around the room. He could easily bolt the doorway and make a dash for the jungle. Surely it was madness to thus approve of allowing these savages to blind him! It was all clear now he had been hypnotized! He was being controlled by the powerful mentality of the people. But now he was free! Now his own mind was reasoning! Sacrifice his sight—his eyes? Why, the idea was preposterous!

But Laomi, what of her? How could he leave her? What did all the world have to offer compared to the cup of happiness and contentment she held out to him? Escape? Where—what for—from what? She belonged to him, and he to her. Why hesitate? He would be happy here with Laomi . . . his Laomi. What mattered eyes, sight, vision? What did the world have worth seeing, if he couldn't see her?

Resolutely he faced the Council. "I am ready," he declared, with a forced firmness. It was too late to recall the words. He must go on now.

The four guards stepped forward without visible signal. In compliance with their orders, Standish stretched his body upon the ground face upwards. The four guards knelt beside him.

Strong hands pinned him to the earth. Only seconds now stood between him and eternal darkness. The crude "operation" of burning out the pupils of his eyes would be brief. There would be no hesitancy on the part of one of the Council whose honor it would be to perform the ceremony. It would all be over quickly.

It was only an extreme power of will that prevented Standish from having a last-minute change of heart. But this would only prolong the agony. Despite his situation, he watched with an agonizing interest the preparations being made for the performance. In the corner of the hut a tiny fire had heated a small metallic stone until it emitted a dull red glow.

Deftly, the Councilman, using two long smooth rocks as tongs, grabbed the heated coal. Despite the mental anguish he suffered, Standish could not but marvel at the accuracy and confidence displayed by the sightless man. With unerring precision, the man approached and slowly directed the hot stone toward him.

Hands like vises gripped him. If he had been bound to a splint with leather straps, he would not have been more immovable. His heart pounded wildly. He looked up at the cold, expressionless faces of his well-meaning inquisitors. To have sought an indication of sympathy was futile. Stern, determined and unshaken, the stone came closer. Already the heat of the glowing mass could be felt.

Reason, held in check during days—hours—minutes—even seconds of interminable torture, gave way! Instinct finally gained domination—the desire to live—the protection of self—the primitive fear of the unknown—of darkness. His whole being rose in protest against this approach of wanton destruction.

Vainly did he call out to halt the procedure as the hot stone bore down upon him with an undeviating accuracy. Mad, uncontrollable fear swept him. "Stop it! Stop it!" he screamed. . . . "I don't want to be blind! . . . I don't want to stay here! . . . I don't want Laomi! . . . For God's sake . . . stop!" Every muscle strained, every ounce of strength in his powerful frame struggled against the irresistible force of the four men who held him rigid. The stone was upon him. To struggle was futile. A powerful hand held open his eyelid. The light of day broke through the crevices of the crudely made hut. A faint hiss. Another. A shriek of agony. Darkness. Silence. . . .

The deed was done he was now a qualified citizen of the valley.

THEY were alone . . . Standish and Laomi. The bitter shock of living a new existence . . . the darkness of the day . . . the blackness of the night . . . was diminishing. Slowly, Standish was learning of a new life: bright in memories, dim in hope. Each passing day brought only a more firm resignation to his Fate.

Laomi crept closely to him as the cooling breeze of the tropic night brushed their faces. A protecting arm crushed her to him. Her presence would lend new encouragement . . . new ambitions . . . new hopes! Together, life would bring new happiness . . . here . . . together . . . in the Valley of the Blind, where, as even in his own world, men with eyes see not . . . where men of vision are outcasts . . . where men, blind like the herd, become Kings!

THE END.

An Engineering Epic

By T. O'Conor Sloane, Ph.D.

"OH! that mine enemy would write a book." This familiar quotation embodies much wisdom. But when one who is not your enemy, one who has done a wonderful achievement, writes a book describing it in all minuteness, and leads up to a successful result brought about by months and months of heroism, not only on the part of the writer but also of those who were associated with him, men principally of what is rather unjustly termed low degree, it is a book worth reading.

A steamship was proceeding along in the vicinity of Block Island off the Atlantic Coast. Near her a vessel's light was seen. It was a submarine. The ship was being steered by a subaltern. The fact that the light had been seen, as it got pretty close, was told to the captain, who rushed to the bridge and apparently did the legally right thing in changing the course of his ship. But the legally right thing in this case ran him right into the submarine, making a great hole in her, so that she sank instantly and drowned a number of men who were on board. Very few were saved. Partly from sentimental reasons orders were given to raise her, and the task was undertaken by the hero, as we may term him, of the book. The method to be adopted was to lift her from the bottom, with chains passing under her and bringing her to the surface, so as to get her into a drydock. All this seems to be simplicity itself.

The submarine was to be lightened as far as possible by sealing up all the apertures in the deck, possible to a great degree in a submarine but utterly impossible in a surface vessel. This being done, air was to be pumped into the vessel, so as to displace water and make it that much lighter. Then chains were to be passed underneath it to be attached to pontoons on each side, which pontoons were to be sunk nearly to the surface level by admitting water and when the chains were attached to them, were to be lightened by pumping air into them so as to expel the water, so that they would rise and draw the sunken vessel to the surface. All this seems very simple. But when the vessel to be rescued is many feet below the surface of the water, in inky darkness, bedded in mud, the task appears to be a frightfully difficult one. For months the author of the book who was in complete charge of the work, with his fleet of rescuing vessels, spent months there, in calm and in storm, in all kinds of weather, working forever at the almost interminable task. Months were required to get the vessel sealed up but at last this was executed. Then chains had to be passed beneath the ship. The divers took down nozzles, secured to pressure hose and jets of water were forced out and were directed against the mud beneath the vessel in hopes of tunneling through. But it turned out that a man could not hold the nozzle against the reaction and this process proved virtually futile.

Meanwhile some one on the ship got an idea, and worked out a nozzle which would eject water at high pressure both forward and aft, the forward jet boring its way through the mud, the after-jet disposing of the mud by throwing it far to the rear. And not only that but the rear jets of water counterbalanced by their reaction, the backward pressure generated by the reaction of the forward jet. The minute this was taken down there was a complete revelation. The diver had to use the former one at very low pressure. Here, to the astonishment of those on the deck of the ship, he kept telephoning for more pressure, more pressure—and the improved nozzle bored its way beneath the ship with perfect success. The description of the surprise on board the ship, when the telephone messages kept coming up from the diver asking for more pressure, and more pressure, is one of the passages that gives a personal touch to the narration. And so the chains were got through these tunnels, pontoons were drawn around to each side and then more trouble began. The pontoons seemed to be charged with a true spirit of mischief and gave endless trouble by refusing to lie horizontally in the water.

The description of the way the pontoons acted seemed to indicate that they were possessed of a malevolent spirit. There was hardly a disagreeable or troublesome thing they could do, that they failed in executing very successfully. But at last by great patience, and by repeated trials they were coupled to the chains, the water was pumped out of them, and the vessel rose and appeared above the surface of the water after nearly a year of work.

It had been necessary in many cases to burn off some of the iron work of the sunken vessel. The oxhydrogen blowpipe giving a highly oxidizing flame can be lighted by electricity and will burn beneath the surface of the water and this was a most important tool, but again there was trouble. The blow-pipes furnished by the Navy were almost useless and of insufficient power and the Commander in charge, the author of the book we are speaking of, had to devise one himself and the one which he invented did the work perfectly.

The diving was done by U. S. Navy divers, but the Commander in Charge, during the winter practiced diving himself and several times went down and worked on the ship. In the Navy Yard at Newport there was a diver who was very anxious to come out and help. Gradually the force of divers became exhausted, because the work was so severe, some went to the hospital, and in various ways, the force was reduced. The Navy Yard authorities at the Torpedo station would not permit this diver to go, so he took the bull by the horns, resigned from the Navy, and went off as a civilian to help and he did wonderful work. He came up from the sunken vessel after one of his dives and brought with him the bell from the submarine wrapped in a piece of canvas, which he wanted to keep. The commander took the bell away from him and said he was sorry, but it had to go to Annapolis. He was sorry for the diver.

But this leads to the concluding episode of the book, one which will almost bring tears to your eyes. After the long tow through Long Island Sound down to New York including a grounding on a rock in the East River, when they were only a mile from their destination, and in the hands of a local pilot, the boat was put into drydock at last. The divers were standing apart in a group, when the commander called over this civilian diver, as he was then, and handed him the bell which he had previously taken away from him and told him he had earned it and could keep it. The diver took it greatly delighted and then what did he do? He pointed to the group of divers standing a little ways off and said, "Captain, there isn't one of those men there that wouldn't go to hell for you."

From the engineering standpoint the story is most interesting, it shows in everything done a touch of originality, a departure from the stiff standard methods which have impeded progress so much in governmental processes. And as a culmination the author of the book who was the hero of the whole affair says that beyond the distinguished service medal which was given to him for his wonderful achievement, beyond everything else, he valued what that diver said to him as given on the very last page of the book.

Working in mud at the bottom of the river, in bitter cold, coming in contact with the corpses of those drowned and who have been immersed for months, hidden in darkness and in danger of life, all this is a very sad picture, not only tinged but brightly colored by true heroism, by true intellectuality contending with such difficulties, and while it may seem to be a pretty prosy affair to tell simply what was done to raise a ship from the bottom of the water, to the mind of the writer of these lines, the story reads like an epic poem, almost comparable with the lives of the Homeric heroes, only that here good work was being done, while by the others, it was mostly personal attacks and war.

DISCUSSIONS

BRICKBATS, BUT NOT FOR AMAZING STORIES, BUT FOR ITS CRITICS

Editor, AMAZING STORIES:

This is my second time to write to you. I wish to thank you for publishing my first letter.

Now to throw brickbats galore—not at our "mag.," not at the stories it contains, not at the Editor; but at some of those chronic brick-tossers. I hope and pray to some day be within five miles of one of these killjoys with a brickbat in my hand; my fury would lend wings to that projectile and my sense of justice would guide it on its mission, that mission would be to pound some clear, unbiased, unprejudiced, thinking into the dome of that chronic pessimist. Strong? I mean it to be strong, the stronger the better. Some of the Discussions I read irritate my nerves so much that I have to buy another magazine to placate myself (I'm not red headed). Some Discussions show clear thinking ability, reasonable statements, and unprejudiced viewpoints; let me commend these persons.

I have just finished reading the Discussions in the January, 1932, issue. The first letter, by Bernard Buridan, of Toledo, Ohio, gives me a royal pain in the neck.

Mr. Buridan mentions awesome silence, moral-shattering sameness, heat and cold, dread sensation of not moving or of constantly falling, cosmic rays, lack of weight, feeling of impotence, homesickness. I think anyone with clear reasoning would be able to figure that even a phonograph would end silence, or even take a woman along. Moral shattering sameness exists in every factory or in nearly every poor man's life to a much greater degree than it could in a space ship there would be plenty of excitement aboard one I think, especially dodging meteors, etc., and about cosmic rays man doesn't know what effect, if any, they would have on a person in the amount with which they would come in contact out in space. Speaking of lack of weight, I wonder if the author of this letter ever tried standing on his head; if he did he surely can reason out that his weight in regard to his body was reversed to the full extent of gravity, reasoning would show him that no weight would produce only half of that sensation. Mr. Buridan must have an inferiority complex to mention such things as feeling of impotence and homesickness; such fields for thought are left for the weak willed. Strong men of strong will power know no such things.

A Mr. Hester remarks that time is the sole possible fourth dimension. Is he a research mathematician who has proven his point? I see he offers no proof of his statement. I wish to ask him if he ever carried a number up to the fifth or sixth power and understood what he was doing as he did it, 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 means 2 developed to the sixth power, in other words he is dealing in the sixth dimension and yet he claims that the fifth or sixth dimensions are a little better than Munchhausen. He speaks of J. W. Campbell, Jr., as inexact in his science in the stories he writes for A. S. I wish to ask him if he thinks this magazine is a scientific treatise of some sort. The name AMAZING STORIES makes full allowance for such deviations from exact science.

That sixteen-year-old boy, L. M. Jensen, apparently has a better think-tank than most of the Discussioners, "Discusses," or just plain "cusses," I don't know which to say. I heartily appreciate all his questions that he lists. I would like to see them answered. If anyone wants to try, have that person write to me, and explain it. He'll be sure to get an answer in a big way.

Mr. Milton Kaletsky says time may be energy; let me state a simple definition from high school physics—energy is a force capable of doing work. Can time do any work? If it can, I'm not brilliant enough to see it.

I like AMAZING STORIES just fine, the authors suit me to a "T," so nuff said.

Noel F. Waite,
379 N. Henderson Ave.,
Cape Girardeau, Missouri.

A VERY NICE LETTER FROM A MICHIGAN READER WHO THINKS OUR MAGAZINE IS GETTING BETTER ALL THE TIME

Editor, AMAZING STORIES:

This is my first letter to your magazine, although I have been reading it for some time. I thing it is getting better every issue, although there have been many good stories in the past years.

I still remember "The Face in the Abyss," by A. Merritt; "The Land That Time Forgot," by Burroughs; "The Master Mind of Mars," by Burroughs, and "The Skylark of Space," by Smith.

I think your best authors are Otis A. Kline, Edward E. Smith, Jack Williamson, Harl Vincent, R. F. Starzl, and Captain S. P. Meek, although your other authors are good, too.

Looking through your Discussions I see that quite a few readers would like to buy some Scientific Fiction. I have quite a few Science stories that I have read and I would be glad to sell them.

I have Scientific Fiction by such authors as Edgar Rice Burrough, A. Merritt, Ray Cummings, Ralph M. Farley, Garret Smith, Otis A. Kline, Harl Vincent, Jack Williamson and R. F. Starzl.

Clayton Worden,
R. F. D. No. 5,
Flint, Michigan.

AN APPRECIATION OF OUR MAGAZINE MOREY ADMIRED AS AN ILLUSTRATOR. SOME BACK NUMBERS FOR SALE

Editor, AMAZING STORIES:

I have just failed the eight A semester in school and things sure look gloomy. However, I find a singular object of mutual interest—A. S. I certainly and firmly believe that it is the best in its field, but the sky is the limit and why not go the limit (Although you have practically reached it)? The only thing lacking in its stories is originality. (The fault with so many things today.) There was, however, a very original, interesting and sequel-provoking story some time back, "Tumithak of the Corridors" of which author I demand a sequel. Morey is the best illustrator you ever had or ever will have, so keep him for the whole magazine as long as possible. I have the magazines for the following months which I will sell for fifteen cents apiece or all for two dollars: March 1928—February, April, June, July, August, September, October—1929. July, November 1930 and August and November 1931.

I also like your editorials and questionnaire as the reader can get knowledge while he is enjoying himself and also find out how much he is observing while reading.

Woodrow Wolford,
1876 E. 70th,
Cleveland, Ohio.

(Personally we were greatly pleased with "Tumithak of the Corridors." So much has been said about a sequel, that we hope the author will take the hint. The great object, of course, in a short story is to keep the reader more or less in suspense and certainly the description of Tumithak's good work must have had that effect on many readers. You must realize that there will be always much difference in the quality of our stories. O. Henry, Hawthorne, Edgar Allan Poe each published stories of varying merit, and some which pleased a certain class of readers would be unpopular with others. We must thank you and we do it most sincerely for what you say about the Editorials and the Questionnaire.—EDITOR.)

A LETTER REFERRING TO THE AUTHOR, MR. J. W. SKIDMORE, ON THE SUBJECT OF TELEPATHY

Editor, AMAZING STORIES:

It is not often that a critic is honored by a direct reply to a criticism from the author of an object criticized.

Needless to say, I am delighted to hear from you. It is seldom that I meet or hear of any one who seems to know or care anything about telepathy. I want to talk to you about this business of telepathy, and it is much more convenient to do it directly, than it would be to carry on the discussion through the medium of some publication.

Since I received your letter the other day, I have gotten out my letter to AMAZING STORIES, and read again my comment on your use of the subject of telepathy. Now, as a matter of fact, I liked the story "Dramatis Personae," very much. It is a good story. Since I read your letter I can see your viewpoint all right.

There is nothing in my well intended criticism that I can modify. Nevertheless, as you say, what is abnormal today, would not necessarily be considered abnormal in the future. It is true, too, that the people in the story were not such as would be considered normal in our present world. Since you have explained your position in regard to the use of the term, telepathy, I realize that possibly you know more of the subject than I ever hope to know.

You may have seen Mr. Clifton Amesbury's comment on my letter to AMAZING STORIES. His letter appeared in the May issue of the magazine. In his letter he objected in a courteous manner to some of the points in my criticism of Taine's story, "Seeds of Life." He says, "Mr. Campbell's remarks on telepathy are odd. First, they are so dogmatic on a subject which is less known than any other. Certainly very few, if any person, can communicate by telepathy, but it may be just a very recent set of mutations, which has not yet reached the bulk of the population. As a means of communication, it may be still in the process of making."

Concerning the possibility of the faculty of telepathy being a recent mutation, I rather think that Mr. Amesbury is exercising a well-developed sense of humor. But in case he is not, but is serious, he may be reminded that there have been occurrences of the exhibition of telepathy since the dawn of written history, and it seems altogether probable that there would have been cases long before. Of course, it was not recognized for what it is until the time of Mesmer's historic practice, and later Braid, Liebault, and Professor Bernheim of Nancy, and still later the investigations of the London Society for Psychical Research.

Like you, I cannot enter into a full discussion of this interesting subject here and now.

I might mention here a few items that you may or may not know. Many of the early prophets were psychic, they exercised the faculty of telepathy and allied phenomena. Moses, and most of the other prophets worthy of the name, knowingly or unknowingly made use of some of the faculties of the soul. They were to that extent, at least, abnormal. Mr. Amesbury makes the statement that my remarks "are so dogmatic." It remains to be seen whether they "are so dogmatic." According to the definition of dogma, he implies that my remarks are only an expression of opinion—either my own or somebody elses. If my remarks were solely based on opinion, either my own or that of some other, he would be right; but as a matter of fact, they are not so based. It might be classed as dogma to maintain that water is a combination of the two gases, hydrogen and oxygen. Now we do not so class any such belief, because the belief or assertion is based on observed facts. It is not considered a hypothesis any more because it has been experimentally demonstrated to be true. The most that can be said of any scientific hypothesis is that whether it is true in

the abstract or not, when everything happens as though it were true; when no pertinent fact remains that is not explained by the hypothesis, then, not till then, are we justified in accepting it as true.

Mr. Amesbury says, "It is not at all certain that there is any such thing as a soul." The definition of soul given in the "Standard Dictionary" suits me, in general terms. If my contention concerning telepathy rested altogether on the supposition that the soul is an actuality; if it necessarily remained to be proven that the soul does not exist, in order to prove that telepathy is a delusion; then, Mr. Amesbury might entertain doubts as to the existence of the faculty of telepathy. But as far as I am concerned, it does not matter in the least whether the soul as ordinarily defined ever existed. If it were to be definitely proven that there is no soul, my story as to telepathy would nevertheless be the same. In fact, if it can be proven that telepathy is, and that it is a faculty of the human soul, then it indicates *a priori*, that the soul is.

As for telepathy being so unknown, it is not so much unknown as Mr. Amesbury seems to think. If he will examine the reports of the London Society for Psychical Research, also the reports of the American branch, he can hardly be so sure as to the obscurity of telepathy.

CHARLES L. CAMPBELL,
Q. M. Detachment,
Presidio, San Francisco.

(The interesting letter given above, which we have appropriated for our Discussions Columns, is almost the complete text of a letter to the author of "Dramatis Personae." The subject of telepathy has been very attractive for many of our authors, so that this letter is very timely, whether we agree with the writer or not.—EDITOR.)

AN ENCOURAGING LETTER FROM ENGLAND. BUT PEOPLE ARE BEGINNING TO APPRECIATE SCIENTISTS

Editor, AMAZING STORIES:

May I render you my appreciation for your wonderful editorial AMAZING STORIES. I notice you receive severe criticism from your *very faithful* readers, well I criticize you for publishing them.

I have just finished reading the March edition, and notice one of my countrymen condemn the "Introduction of ladies." I wonder if he is human. Your comment, however, proves good medicine.

I have taken A. S. for some time now, and I like stories from the pen of A. Hyatt Verrill, A. Merritt, and Miles J. Breuer. "The Master Mind of Mars," was a corker, while "The Bridge of Light," "The Face in the Abyss," "The Non-Gravitational Vortex" and "Monsters of the Ray," would take some beating.

Why do 75% of the people ridicule Science, scorn Scientists, since the time of the old Alchemists down to the present day they are regarded as insane, but when War shakes the country, followed by pestilence they appeal to the laboratory with outstretched arms.

Prospects of Interplanetary travel, Disintergration of the Atom, and the Fourth Dimensional problem are laughed at, but your slogan is the best answer I know.

"Extravagant fiction today. Cold fact tomorrow."

Wishing your paper unparalleled success in the future.

J. C. Atkinson,
17 Balaclava Road,
Sheffield, England.

(We do not altogether agree with you in what you say about the public's appreciation of scientists. The German comic papers have for a long time made the absent-minded professor the subject for jokes. But a great change has come over the world. The radio has done a great deal to bring science close to the people and no one who has heard broadcasting from a station thousands of miles distant can do anything but admire scientists. And now television is on its way. The airplane by scientific investigation and study is being brought to an astonishing development, and we can go right down the line and quote instances of the innumerable things that scientists have done for mankind. The point is that these achievements to which we specially refer, touch so vividly upon our everyday life that they bring the scientists and the everyday man very close together.—EDITOR.)

A VERY LIVE CORRESPONDENT'S APPRECIATION OF OUR WORK. AN ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE EDITORS.

Editor, AMAZING STORIES:

I've just finished the February, 1932, issue of "our" magazine, and simply must write and tell you how pleased I am with it.

About a half a year ago, AMAZING STORIES was, to tell the truth, pretty "punk." It was dry—the illustrations were poor—and I was beginning to fear that AMAZING STORIES, the pioneer of the science-fiction magazines, would soon become a "has been."

But then came the January, 1932, issue—and what an issue! It was the best one you had put out for two years! The cover was excellent; a typical one for a fantastic magazine. "Power!" The Machine Age! A Futuristic Touch to the Illustration! I'll never forget that cover as long as I live. And what stories! It is impossible to pick the best: I must congratulate Charles Tanner for his masterpiece. I needn't congratulate Vincent—all his stories are great. And The Lemurian Documents promise to be a little *chef-d'oeuvre*.

Now you have gone ahead and put out another excellent issue in the February number. It has another cover that I like particularly well for this type of magazine. I wish you would try and keep this up in the future. Don't have ordinary covers—try and make them fantastic in themselves. I'd like to bet more new readers were attracted to your magazine by the cover than by the name. However, I would have liked to see, on the cover, the two suns that Neil R. Jones describes so admirably. By the way, I've got a bone to pick with this guy Jones. What does he mean by leaving our hero, 21MM392, out in lonely space to live for ever and ever without having any more adventures? You'd better tell him to start working on another serial—yes, a *serial* sequel, continuing the adventures of Jameson. "Troyana" promises to be even better than "Drums of Tapajos" impossible as it seems. Keller is always good, as proven in his latest, "The Pent House." Say, Keller has written for you at least twenty stories. And I'm still waiting for you to give him a cover! Don't you think it's about time he got one? Make Leinster keep his typewriter busy. I'm aching for more of his yarns. I still believe that the best story he ever wrote was "A Runaway Skyscraper." I've only read it about 10 times.

Do you remember when you used to own Station WRNY? Well, I was just thinking it wouldn't be a bad idea for you to have an "AMAZING STORIES Hour" over the radio. Think of what a thrill it would give the radio public to hear stories of the far distant future! I've asked many non-reading-science-fiction friends of mine if they would like to hear such a story. They replied that if they were broadcasting such stories, and they didn't have a radio, they would go right out and buy one! There! You now have your chance to help bring back prosperity!

Julius Schwartz,
407 East 183rd Street,
New York, New York.

(You are not the first correspondent who has lately written to us about Prof. Jameson. We are very glad you like Dr. Keller's work. He has done an immense amount of story writing and personally is a man of very high standing in his profession. As regards reading a story on the radio, one can only get in about 2,000 words in a half hour, so we are naturally somewhat limited. When we were on the radio, the station was the property of the company, but it has since then been sold.—EDITOR.)

A LETTER OF CRITICISM—BUT WE DO NOT GIVE ENOUGH LOVE MOTIF TO HURT OUR STORIES

Editor, AMAZING STORIES:

Just my reaction to the stories in July issue of AMAZING STORIES:

1. "Message from Space"—This is ingenious and rather clever, I think. On the whole, I liked it very much.

2. "Flamingo"—Well—what do you think? Is it scientific? Well—yah, I guess so. But what, if anything, is it supposed to depict? A new departure from our already mechanical entertainments of artificial actors with artificial voices? What, by the way, difference is there between an animated shadow with a telephonic voice and a mechanical man made, presumably of steel springs and rubber—also with a telephonic voice? And don't we grow nearly as good scenery here in California as they do within the shadow of the Alps? If anything, I should think that our modern movies would have the edge over your mechanical actors in that the originals of the movies were real. Isn't it more natural for a picture made from the living motions of a real man to imitate the necessary moods than it is for a "robot" with cast-iron heart to depict a love scene for instance? Maybe we'd better admit that this story is "cute" and let it go at that. Shall we?

3. "The Driving Power"—Charming writing. Dr. Miles J. Breuer is to be complimented. Now, if he hadn't only forgotten that this was supposed to be a scientific yarn instead of a mushy love story—all would have been well for everybody—including the reader—would have been happy. Why, oh why, must gush and mush and pathos be dragged by the ears or the tail into a story purported to be about science? I ask you, what is scientific about this: "They felt a stirring in their little breasts and the next thing they knew, they were in each others'——" Oh, what's the use?

4. "The Universe Wreckers"—The enclosed clipping ought to be self-explanatory. If you have the authority, please request Edmond Hamilton to go back to school and increase his vocabulary to at least "Basic English," 800 words. Inform him, for me, that action, or rather, hectic motions, is not necessarily drama.

5. "Paradox (Plus)—(My typewriter has no plus sign)—Look: "I admire your friend, Cannes, and I'm sorry for him, but Greta is my girl, not his."

6. "A Visit to Suari"—Ah—here's a story! A gem, by jimminy! A. Hyatt Verrill has my unqualified endorsement as a writer of rare ability. His humor is delightful. His treatment, so far as I can now recall, original. If you can get in touch with him, tell him thanks for me. More power to his squeaking pen or his rattling, virile typewriter!

This is one story in the July issue that is really GOOD.

Very truly,
Albin Busek,
1317 W. 11th St.,
Los Angeles, Calif.

(Your letter is most amusing, so much so that in spite of its criticisms, we wish that we could get more like it, and we are going to let it speak for itself, but don't be too hard upon the use of the love motif in stories. Think of what it has done in the greatest literature of the world—in the plays of Shakespeare and Milton and coming down to more modern times with Dickens and Thackeray, the great masters of story-telling, who all use this motif in their stories. What we have said in complimenting your letter, we mean. It is a most interesting contribution to our discussions column.—EDITOR.)

FROM A VERY YOUNG READER

Editor, AMAZING STORIES:

I am only 13 years of age and perhaps I should not criticize our magazine. But I am sure my remarks will be pardoned.

If Capt. Meek doesn't get mad and remind me of my limited knowledge, I would like to point out a few mistakes in his story, "Submicroscopic," which is the most amusing story I have read for a long time.

His theory is impossible because:

1. Heat an object and it expands; therefore expand it and it heats. Countney would have burned when he made himself so large and as the same is true of cold, he would have frozen in his trip to Ulm.

2. "In the fall of 1927" extract from page 400. If Ulm had seasons, then the electron revolved around its nucleus exactly as our world revolves around our sun—at the same speed and takes the same time. Why should it?

3. In the foreword, the editor tells us it is a story of life on an electron, yet the author says "at any time some prospector might find my Valley and wash out a pan of dirt and dump the rubbish on Ulm." Now if this happened, the rubbish would not touch Ulm, but its atoms would make millions of other solar systems around them.

4. How can people on an electron know Hawaiian?

5. There is absolutely no chance of Countney landing on Ulm, for, if he lands directly where Ulm was, Ulm won't be there, because it re-

tates around its nucleus and he will land in space.

The story was well written, but it had more holes than a slice of Limburger cheese.

George Pennington,
115 — 27th St.,
Newport News, Va.

(If you cause gas to expand, it becomes colder, not hotter, as you seem to think. There is no reason why there should not have been seasons in Ulm—there is no reason why their language should not resemble Hawaiian—also why shouldn't Countney land upon the Ulm electron? If he "landed" near it, would not gravitation pull him to it? Also where did you find that Limburger cheese has holes in it.—EDITOR.)

A LETTER ON VERY ADVANCED TOPICS FROM A YOUNG CONTRIBUTOR

Editor, AMAZING STORIES:

You say you like letters from young readers. Well a 14-year-old boy is not old. AMAZING STORIES is the best "Mag" on the market, it is better than most. I know, all because it has more science. "Cosmic Power" was good. So was "Atomic Fire," "The Beautiful Bacillus" was fine. My favorite authors are: Miles J. Breuer, David H. Keller, Jack Williamson, John W. Campbell and E. E. Smith. Paul and Wesso are excellent artists. I am very much interested in the various dimensions. So I'll give my opinion on them. I do not think time is a dimension. I rather think it is an envelop, surrounding the Three matter dimensions. Matter has three dimensions. Surrounded by the time space inside of the time envelop is the time space. Outside the time envelop are motion dimensions, which end in another series of dimensions. Space is the huge envelop, enveloping all dimensions. Each envelop contributes its dimensions to the others. As time dimension reaches into the motion and matter dimensons, and motion into the others. Now for time traveling. Einstein says nothing can go faster than light, that is so only inside our envelop. Light runs along the side of it, because of the curvature which limits ts speed. So if you remove the envelop, get into motion, travel along, then break through again ahead of where you started.

I think our whole universe is the inside of a molecule. Each atom is a universe. The nucleus is the Sun and the Electrons are Planets, the Pronton is 1800 times bigger than the Electron. Our molecular galaxy is in some molecule, and that within another. So it is infinite. The atoms are only relatively close.

Stuart Pence, Jr.,
12 Strathmore Road,
Brookline, Mass.

(We publish this letter from a 14-year-old boy, exactly as it was written. Our personal feeling in all these matters is that we do not know as much as we think we do, and there is so much to be known that our relatively small fraction is very little in proportion to the whole. If this letter shows nothing else, it shows how a 14-year-old boy can think and how he can handle really abstruse topics.—EDITOR.)

AN AMAZING STORY WANTED FOR THE "ELITE"

Editor, AMAZING STORIES:

I have just finished reading my first issue of "our" magazine, which I, to my embarrassment, enjoyed very much. Please don't misunderstand me. I will explain.

The other day I was a bit out of sorts and went to the bookstore to buy something of a light nature. I was embarrassed to death when I bought your magazine, but after the first story imagine my surprise to find it entirely different from its looks. You have some rather intelligent stories, but the cover, the cheap paper, and the poor class of advertising are, oh, so misleading!

Now, Mr. Editor, may I make a suggestion? I realize that you have a good following in a certain class of people *but* there is the other—and they would not buy your magazine because it is not the kind that they would put on the library table with such as the *New Yorker*, *Time*, etc. Why not this? Form a new type. Keep your AMAZING STORIES for one class and put out a magazine with a snap to it and yet a sophistication equal to that of the *Washingtonian* and the *New Yorker*. You must admit that it would be a new idea for the "Elite" and if handled properly should meet with great success.

Harley W. Jefferson, Jr.,
323 W. Wash St.,
Petersburg, Va.

(We are glad to hear from you that we have "Some rather intelligent stories." We are glad you can say that much for them. Your suggestion for a new magazine can be well answered by our advising you to study the newsstands and see what a confusing number of magazines are issued. But no one can tell what the future will bring out. AMAZING STORIES, which started in April, 1926, was quite an innovation, and has led the way for a number of what we may fairly term imitators. Meanwhile we certainly hope that the fates may be kind enough to help us reach our goal.—EDITOR.)

BACK NUMBERS WANTED

Editor, AMAZING STORIES:

As a reader of your magazine, I have enjoyed your stories to the extent that I have become a constant follower. Your discussion columns have also been a source of worthwhile knowledge and entertainment. At times I noticed requests for back numbers. I have in my possession quite a number of such magazines.

Should there be any further inquiries, you might refer them to me.

Editor, AMAZING STORIES:

I hope you publish this letter in the "Discussions" column of an early issue as I would like to purchse back numbers from some of your older readers.

Will anyone who has all the copies of AMAZING STORIES Monthly, Quarterly and Annual to about the end of 1928, who lives in Manhattan or Bronx and is willing to sell his back numbers, please communicate with me? The magazines should be in good condition, with all or practically all of the front covers on or available.

Jack Cypin,
1271 Hoe Avenue,
Bronx, N. Y.

(The publishing of your letters will put you in touch with our readers who may have back numbers to dispose of. We would suggest that you look through the "Discussions," in which you will find letters from readers who have such numbers and are willing to sell them.—EDITOR.)

A VIGOROUS LETTER FROM A NEW READER

Editor, AMAZING STORIES:

I was up to a lad's house and spotted AMAZING STORIES "mag." and took it home. It was one of the best magazines I've ever read. I got the January issue yesterday and am getting the quarterly tonight. I did not have to read your magazine for 2 or 3 years to tell you it hit the spot.

I think that idea that some of your other readers have about a yearly reprint number is just the thing, then I could read all the good ones I've missed. There is a lot of scientific knowledge to grasp in your stories, but if I never learn much from them, it is really good reading material. I will be a supporter of your magazine until I haven't the quarter to pay for one.

Harold Gatty,
114 Seigel St.,
Joliet, Md.

(We can only say, in answer to this very spirited letter, that we hope that in spite of the panic and the hard times, you will have your monthly quarters and tri-monthly fifty-cent pieces for many months in the future.—EDITOR.)

THE LIMITS OF THE PATHS OF RAYS

Editor, AMAZING STORIES:

I have been an ardent reader of A. S. for the past year, and I would like to compliment you on the excellent run of stories that have appeared in the last twelve issues.

Now I would like to ask a question concerning Francis Flagg's story "The Resistant Ray," that appeared in the July issue.

If the resistant ray could have been adjusted to the length of the room, why couldn't it have been adjusted to the height of the room also, and thereby leave no room for Ragnar to escape?

Surely Doctor Bush must have thought of the matter of regulating it for height also, when he constructed the machine.

Respectfully yours,
Donald Scholz,
251 New York Ave.,
Newark, N. J.

(It is perfectly fair in fiction to depict a ray of a subject as having definite limitations. A gun carriage by its construction limits the amount of elevation which can be given to the gun and the projectile's path. We can easily conceive of a ray being limited in like manner by the construction of the machine producing it.—EDITOR.)

STATEMENT OF THE OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, CIRCULATION, ETC., REQUIRED BY THE ACT OF CONGRESS OF AUGUST 24, 1912,

Of AMAZING STORIES QUARTERLY published Quarterly at Dunellen, N. J., for October 1st, 1932.

State of New York } ss.
County of New York }

Before me, a Notary Public in and for the State and county aforesaid, personally appeared Lee Ellmaker, who, having been duly sworn according to law, deposes and says that he is the Business Manager of the Amazing Stories Quarterly and that the following is, to the best of his knowledge and belief, a true statement of the ownership, management (and if a daily paper, the circulation), etc., of the aforesaid publication for the date shown in the above caption, required by the Act of August 24, 1912, embodied in section 411, Postal Laws and Regulations, printed on the reverse of this form, to wit:

1. That the names and addresses of the publisher, editor, managing editor, and business managers are: Publisher, Teck Publications, Inc., 222 West 39th St., N. Y. C.; Editor, T. O'Conor Sloane, 222 West 39th St., N. Y. C.; Managing Editor, none; Business Manager, Lee Ellmaker, 222 West 39th St., N. Y. C.

2. That the owner is: (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses of stockholders owning or holding one per cent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a firm, company, or other unincorporated concern, its name and address, as well as those of each individual member, must be given.) Teck Publications, Inc., 222 West 39th St., New York City; Lee Ellmaker, 222 West 39th St., New York City.

3. That the known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 per cent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities are: None.

4. That the two paragraphs next above, giving the names of the owners, stockholders, and security holders, if any, contain not only the list of stockholders and security holders as they appear upon the books of the company but also, in cases where the stockholder or security holder appears upon the books of the company as trustee or in any other fiduciary relation, the name of the person or corporation for whom such trustee is acting, is given; also that the said two paragraphs contain statements embracing affiant's full knowledge and belief as to the circumstances and conditions under which stockholders and security holders who do not appear upon the books of the company as trustees, hold stock and securities in a capacity other than that of a bona fide owner; and this affiant has no reason to believe that any other person, association, or corporation has any interest direct or indirect in the said stock, bonds, or other securities than as so stated by him.

LEE ELLMAKER,
Business Manager.

Sworn to and subscribed before me this 1st day of October, 1932.

[SEAL] ABNER GERMANN,
Notary Public.

(My commission expires March 30, 1934.)

For Your Enjoyment!

"Death Plays Bridge" by K. S. Daiger

GREENWAY, a bridge expert, Dr. Francis, Carmela and Reverdy are playing bridge. A hand is dealt . . . the bidding starts . . . a shot rings out . . . Greenway is dead!

The finger of suspicion wavers . . . Truxton, recently released from prison . . . Rosetti, Greenway's butler . . . Estelle, Greenway's maid . . . Verrano, a gang leader. . . . All are suspected! Who killed Greenway?

Local police flounder for clues. . . . Jim Merritt, free-lance detective, comes into the picture. . . . Greenway is discovered to be treasurer of a gang of dope smugglers. . . . The original bridge hands are redealt. . . . The bidding is different. . . . The previous bid was a signal for the murder!

Read "Death Plays Bridge," a quick-moving, tantalizing murder mystery that will keep you in suspense and enthralled from beginning to end. A $2 novel for 25c!

In the February **Complete Detective Novel Magazine**

"Bloody Acres" by E. B. Mann

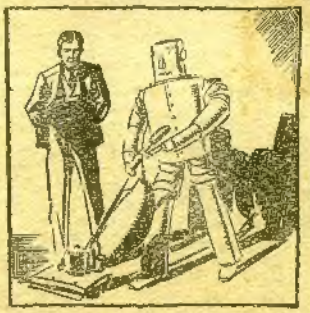
DANNY DUGAN halted at the lip of the bluff overlooking the Great Basin and looked down at the range that was his inheritage. Folks around Jasper called it "Bloody Acres" and gossip had it that the place was jinxed—that it was a man-killer. Five men had bought the ranch—one after another they had died—and the ranch had been returned to the Dugans.

Danny spurred his roan and galloped down into the basin . . . right into the discovery of Bill Simpson's body . . . directly into a feud between Colonel Ruppert and Douglas Arnold, rival ranchmen . . . straight into direct conflict with Whip Clayborn, slick with cards and slicker yet with a gun! In the basin, Danny found romance, intrigue and death awaiting him. Would his uncanny aptness with a gun see him through?

Read "Bloody Acres," a rip-roaring, thrilling tale of the West which will hold you spellbound throughout its entire 114 pages!

In the February **Wild West Stories and Complete Novel Magazine**

"Controlling Machinery by Sound"
by Irving J. Saxl, Ph.D.



SOUND waves such as ordinary speech or musical tones are being employed to actuate, through amplifiers and relays, various forms of machinery at a distance. It is expected that further industrial applications of this principle may become extremely important in industry.

Imagine a great machine in some manufacturing process responding automatically to the spoken words of the machine's operator!

This is not only feasible, but may soon be a practical application in some of our large factories! For full details, read the February issue of *Radio News*.

Also in this issue: "The Eclipse and Radio," "Recording Voices at Home," "Learning the Code," "Extending Loud Speaker Range," "How to Build the New 'Super Six' Midget," and many other interesting articles. If you want to get the thrill of being a spectator of all the day-by-day developments of radio, you will read *Radio News*.

In the February Issue of **Radio News**

Now On Sale
25c Per Copy
At
All Newsstands

Introductory Offer

Five issues of any one of our monthly publications for $1.00. Canada and Foreign $1.50. Send your remittance to Dept. ASQ-1.

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